My Jean

BY

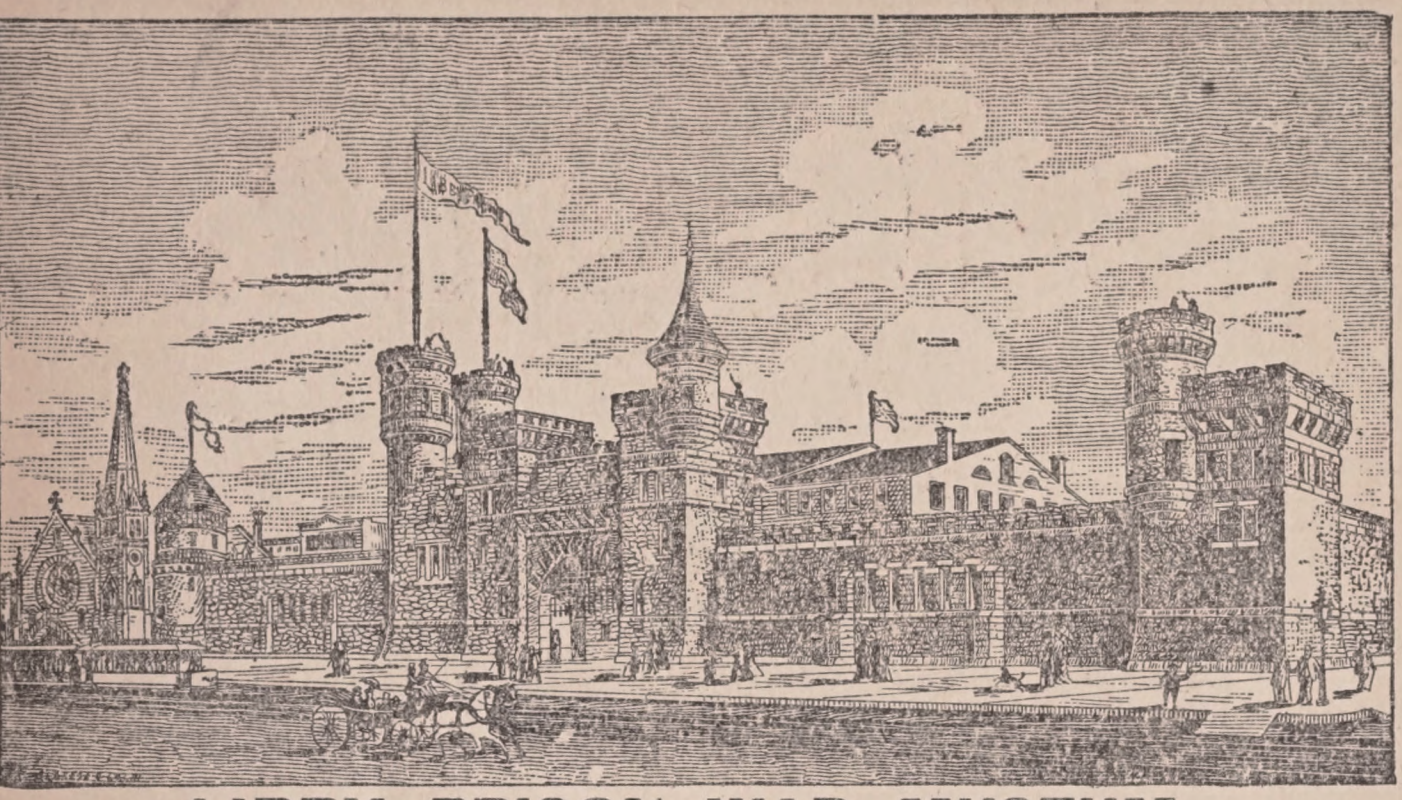
PATIENCE STAPLETON

AUTHOR OF "KADY" ETC.

ILLUSTRATED.

CHICAGO:
MORRILL, HIGGINS & CO.,
PUBLISHERS.

IDYLWILD SERIES. Vol. 1, No. 32, February 6,
Issued Weekly. Annual Subscription, $26.00
Entered in the Postoffice at Chicago
as second-class matter.



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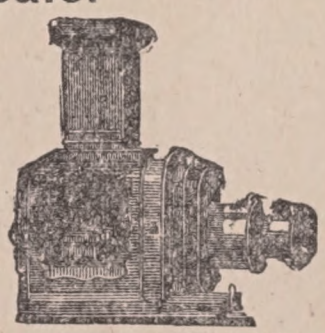

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"WE'VE FOUND A POCKET—THAT'S SILVER, FOOLS, SEE IT SHINE!"—P. 106.

MY JEAN

BY

PATIENCE STAPLETON

Author of "Kady," "Babe Murphy," etc.

"Tho' mountains rise, and deserts howl,
And oceans roar between,
Yet dearer than my deathless soul
I still would love my Jean."

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MY JEAN

CHAPTER I

ACROSS THE PLAINS

Foremost in the long train of white-covered wagons that crossed the plains in 1858 and 1859 to what is now known as Denver, "the Queen City of the Plains," was the train of wagons of old Judge Wallace, of Rocky Creek, Ohio, who, with his two stalwart sons, his fair daughter Virginia, her maid—black-eyed, red-cheeked Rose McCord—and all his household goods, was moving to the new settlement.

The Judge had grown unpopular in his Ohio home. He was the great-grandson of an English earl, and he never forgot this fact. His servants hated him, for they could not understand his self-asserted superiority, and his commanding ways and haughty manner made the honest sons and daughter of the farmers around Rocky Creek enter his service reluctantly to leave it at the earliest opportunity. Finally the Judge imported from Kentucky two negroes who had been slaves, a man and wife, and for his daughter, a child of five just left motherless, he adopted the child of a poor farmer—who had eleven

more—and this girl, then ten years old, was to be Miss Virginia's maid. Rose McCord accepted the situation because she had to, but the ridicule of her playmates and less fortunate sisters made her sullen and discontented. They called her "Wallace's white slave" and "Miss Virginia's maid," with ironical thrusts and malicious innuendoes until the girl hated herself and all the Wallaces, even the little child, her charge, who loved her so. They were proud and rich and had never worked, and this child never would have to await the pleasure of others, wash greasy dishes and answer the summons of a master's bell—this last especially galling to Rose. She had always been a servant and she hated the more fortunate.

When Judge Wallace set out for the settlement across the plains, where he hoped to become the leading man and win all the honors that jealousy and his own unpopularity had deprived him of in Ohio, his sons were twenty and twenty-five, his daughter just fifteen and her maid twenty. There were four wagons belonging to him in the train; the foremost driven by his son Dwight drawn by four fine horses; the next one, drawn by two horses his son George drove, then a wagon with four oxen John Brooks drove, and finally, the white-covered wagon the judge occupied with his daughter and her maid. This was drawn by four oxen and driven by Roy MacDonald, the son of a Scotch lady who came to Rocky Creek, where she died in poverty.

She emigrated to America in search of her husband; people thought she was of good birth and had once been wealthy, for her manners were refined. She was well educated and her clothing and that of her little boy had been costly, though worn and faded. She earned a bare living for several years, teaching painting and music, then worn out in body and mind, died of a lingering fever, without telling her sorrowful story. The boy, left a penniless orphan, was taken into Judge Wallace's household, where he made himself useful for his board and schooling. The degrading tasks given him never brought one dissenting murmur from his firm lips; he seemed to care for nothing but his books, and was the most brilliant scholar in the town school. The Judge never made an equal of him, he ate his meals and sat with black Sam and Molly, who were now in the forward wagon with Brooks. At this time Roy was twenty, a fine manly lad, eager to win fame and fortune in the new country.

The wagons journeyed on, day after day, across the monotonous prairie, over dry burning sand, through cactus and sage brush and buffalo grass, stumbling into the holes of prairie dogs, followed afar by keen-scented coyotes with their melancholy yells, or closer and fiercer, by wolves bold from hunger. The sky above them was a cloudless blue, the sun dazzling and hot. Far off they saw in fear and dread roving bands of Indians; but these emigrants were safe because of their numbers. There were

fifty or sixty wagons. Near the trail were corpses of men and women—some not buried, or unearthed by prowling coyotes, and there were heaps of human bones never sebjected to the decay of nature. In the very trail were the rotting carcasses of oxen and horses. The way was one of dreary horror which all the bright hopes of the future could not alleviate.

One night these emigrants camped beside a creek, knowing on the morrow they would behold the land of their dreams. It was livelier here. Many other travelers were camped at the spot and all were full of energy and excitement. The fires of the different parties shone bright along the creek and were mirrored in the rippling waters, the white-covered wagons made a picturesque feature in the landscape. Even the tethered horses and oxen added charm to the scene. Far, far away stretched the level plains, and away on the horizon was the smoke of campfires of coming people. The full moon making night as day never seemed half so beautiful to these people before. The atmosphere being so clear, the moon and stars seemed brighter and larger than in the East. Groups of men formed at the fires and around the wagons, all talking of the new city to be, and the wealth they should make. It was a lovely fall evening without dampness and the fires were more for cheer than from necessity.

"You will stay in the wagon, Virginia?" said the old Judge, desiring to get acquainted with some of the settlers in the new country, and to join his sons

at a camp-fire a short distance off. "Rose will keep you company, and Roy will see that no one disturbs you; don't let the women have a chance to speak to you."

"No, father," answered the girl in the wagon, obediently. Well satisfied, he went away and left her.

"There's no need of our smothering here," said another voice, after the Judge was out of hearing. "'Tain't against orders to breathe anyhow." So saying a well-formed tall girl got up from the pile of rugs on the wagon floor and looped the curtains up on the side the Judge could not see from his position. Then she leaned out. Even in the moonlight one would notice her great dark eyes, her red cheeks, the mass of black hair coiled about her large head and her full sensual mouth with its strong white teeth. "Come, Miss Virgie," she said in a coarse, deep voice, hesitating on the "Miss," for even that went against the lawless independence of her nature. "You can look out at least. You'd oughter not lose this scene."

"Indeed not," said the same soft voice that had answered the Judge and a second figure came to the opening. A slight, tall girl, fair as a lily, with deep blue eyes and golden-stranded chestnut hair, a sweet face and dainty hands, a lady in every act and look, carefully nurtured and educated. It was a strange place for her, for the sweet, fair women her ancestors loved were nurtured in grand old castles or dwelt at courts.

The two girls talked of the night and the beautiful scene about them, then Rose McCord said, defiantly:

"There's Tom Brooks comin'; I want to talk with him. I mayn't see him again. You'll not care if I go speak to him? Your father won't see, and Tom'll leave for the mountains soon's he gets to Denver."

"Go, by all means, Rose," said Virginia, timidly, for she stood in some fear of this nurse, who had always been a tyrant to her since childhood. "Roy will take care of me."

"Roy will take care of you!" echoed Rose maliciously, as she jumped from the wagon. Then she went out to meet Brooks. He was a short thick-set man, with reddish hair, and a ragged and uneven beard covering his chin and neck. At this time he was about twenty-five. There was a half-defiant air about him, and his small, gray eyes never looked any one in the face. Ugly stories had been told of him in Rocky Creek, and, though never convicted, he was strongly suspected of a murder committed there.

Rose's dark eyes brightened as he sullenly bade her good evening. He considered a sulky air a sign of independence, likely to make him respected.

She put her hand through his unwilling arm. They talked awhile, Rose all fire and pleading, he careless and indifferent. Finally she flung his arm away rudely, saying with fierce passion. "You don't care any more for me; you're hoping to get a rich

girl out here—you're going to play me—cheat me; you'd better not try it!"

"A man can't be making love all the time," he said sullenly, "and talking soft sawder. You know I've promised to yer—that oughter be enough; we couldn't git married anyway, poor as we are. I'll be rich first. I'll find gold and make a fortun'. I come out here for that. Yer wouldn't have me kiss yer 'fore all the crowd there?"

"No, no, Tom," said Rose pleadingly; "you know I wouldn't, you know I don't want to hamper you none; only be true to me, I never keered for none but you. You come to me fust, you was soft in Ohio, if I do say it. You was allus telling me how you keered for me—yet all this journey you haint hardly spoke."

"This ain't Ohio," muttered Tom doggedly.

"But I'm the same; you oughter be," cried Rose, moving away from him. "I don't ask no more from you, but you'd better have my love than my hate." She went close to him. "Take me away soon, Tom, from them. I hate Wallace and them boys and her—that soft-voiced thing who don't lift her hand to do a thing, that I've been a slave to for years. I could kill her!"

"You're a strange one," said Tom, admiringly. "I b'lieve you'd help a feller on in life. A handsome girl, too! Never you mind Rosy, there's lots of luck for you an' me ahead."

They parted then and Rose crept softly to the

back of the wagon where she listened. Virginia and Roy were talking just as she had seen them when she walked away, Roy standing by the wagon, his dark, glowing eyes fixed on Virginia's face. Rose heard him say:

"Through all my sad childhood, Virginia, you have been my only sympathizer, my only friend. I studied to make myself worthy of you. I thought of nothing, nobody but you. Now, I feel in this new country there is a future for me. I will win honor and fame and you will not be ashamed of me. It's like a dream," he went on eagerly, "that you—so beautiful, so proud—say you love me, you will wait for me. Say it again, Virginia, that I may carry the words in my heart!"

"Dear Roy," said Virginia softly, "I do love you; I will wait for you all my life."

Then Rose made her appearance, as if she had heard nothing.

A week after they reached the new settlement, she told Judge Wallace what she had heard. The furious old man turned Roy from his house, and never relaxed his severity and watchfulness toward his daughter. The Judge in hopes to become the most prominent man in the settlement, left Denver, crossed the Platte River to the highlands opposite, and tried to found a new town. In four years he found his mistake. Highland was not the town, and many of his followers deserted and crossed to Denver; but the Judge resolved to remain and be

grand, if solitary. So he built a big house—a wonder in those days, and as costly as a palace.

It was of wood—but solid and handsome, two-storied, with quaint roof and tower and grand pillared portico. He had fine furniture hauled from the east, and set up to be the foremost gentleman in the Territory. His dinners were marvels in those days of privation and poverty and he was admired and reverenced by a large following. His sad, beautiful daughter had suitors enough but none either interested her or touched her heart. The Judge was glad of this, he was sure she had recovered from her silly infatuation for his "stable boy," and he meant her to marry well. One of his sons, George, died soon after his arrival in the new town, of heart disease, which the rarefied atmosphere made fatal, and the Judge had only two children left.

Brooks had not been heard from since the day they arrived. Roy had entered the army and was winning laurels by his bravery in the constant skirmishes with the Indians, Rose still stayed with her young mistress, though in those times of scarcity of women she might have married men who are millionaires to-day.

Virginia Wallace kept her own counsel for four years, but if her father thought she had forgotten her lover he was sadly deceived. If he could have heard what she said to Rose McCord, and have prevented what she did one night, this story could never have been written.

"Will you go with me, Rose?" said Virginia, she had confided in the girl—almost her only friend—her only woman friend in the new country. Rose hesitated; should she tell the Judge and have it stopped, or should she trust to time to bring punishment? The latter was the better course, she thought.

"I will stand by you always," she answered firmly.

"You never told, Rose," questioned Virginia, tremblingly, "that Roy loved me four years ago? You could not have known."

"I didn't," said Rose, promptly; "your brother, Dwight, suspected it. He saw Roy kiss your hand."

"We have been friends so long," went on Virginia, lovingly, putting her arms around Rose's neck—"not mistress and maid, Rose, friends rather—friends and confidants in this lonely new land. Be true to me and you shall always have a home with me, dear Rose."

Rose drew herself away almost rudely; all her best impulses were not yet gone.

"You're bent on going?"she said shortly.

"Yes," said Virginia, solemnly. How much granite strength there is in a fine, strong character disguised under a gentle, yielding manner. Better for persuasion a thousand times over, a passionate, fiery nature.

"Then we'll do it," cried Rose, decisively. "Your father and Mr. Dwight have gone to the meeting of the citizens in Denver. They won't be back till 11

or 12. It's 8 now; the niggers is abed. We can go and get back before them. Where's the wagon camped?"

"On this side of the Platte, close to the water," said Virginia, wrapping herself in her long, dark cloak and drawing its hood over her face.

Then the two went softly out a side door through the young cottonwoods that looked like little shrubs —the soil was so dry and the sun so scorching, and they had fought for life hard. Down the hills through the starlit darkness, Virginia went to her fate and, like a Nemesis—as an evil shadow Rose McCord followed close behind.

CHAPTER II

A SECRET MARRIAGE

Down by the Platte that was now, in the summer season, only a narrow, shallow stream, easy to ford, was a white-covered emigrant wagon, and near it two bony horses were feeding on the bushes along the stream. The bright glow of a camp-fire in the darkness guided Virginia and Rose to the wagon. Close to the fire was a tent, and here a lantern swung, giving a dim, uncertain light, flickering in every breeze that came sweet and odorous from the flower-clad plains down the river valley. In the tent was a white-haired old man in earnest conversation with a handsome young man, wearing the uniform of a federal soldier.

Both men rose when the two women came into the tent, where the soldier introduced the old man as a clergyman—Mr. Valle—who had crossed the plains with a party of emigrants to find his son, who had come to Denver a year before, and who, he found, had been killed in a skirmish with Indians.

"He was my best friend," said Roy, sadly. "Virginia, your gentle heart can feel for his poor father."

Virginia, her eyes full of tears, placed her soft

hand in that of the old man. He was deeply touched, and for a moment forgot the object of her visit.

'I pray God," he said solemnly, still holding the girl's hand and looking into her beautiful eyes that met his gaze unflinchingly, "I may not be wrong; that in doing this I am not making sorrow and adding suffering and crime to the sin-laden world. If trouble should come of it—"

"Look at me," cried Virginia, quickly, "look how thin and worn I am. Look at my bloodless hand —my sunken eyes—my face where all the color of youth is gone; I am only nineteen, yet I look old and careworn; my heart is breaking. This will save me, it will bind me to the man I love. It will make me his—I shall know he will protect me. If thousands of miles are between us I can still feel safe, my father cannot make me marry another man. If he casts me off—turns me out in the world—I will go to my husband."

"My wife!" cried Roy, holding her to his breast. "Only a week, sir, and I must go to the East. My regiment is ordered to Washington; we will go then to fight against the South. There is honor and promotion for me there—I will succeed. My heart will be at rest about my love; she is mine; no one can harm her; she will wait for me, and I can go to battle, sure of her truth and love as I am of my own courage. Rose," he said, turning to the girl who had been a silent listener, "you will care

for my darling, write me if she is sick, if she is ill-treated; she will have a faithful friend in you."

'She will," said Rose earnestly.

The old minister went to the door and looked out. All was silent, only the rippling of the water, the tread of the tethered horses. He sighed, but he called the young couple before him and began a simple marriage service needing no book nor ritual. Roy took from his breast his mother's wedding ring and put it on Virginia's slender finger. Then the minister blest them and they were wed. As solemn and binding that ceremony as in a crowded cathedral with mitred bishop and attendant priests. He wrote a certificate with trembling hand that before the ink was dry Virginia hid in her bosom.

"God bless you," said the old man, as she, trembling and white, clung to Roy's arm. "God care for you both and watch over you. I will not see the end of this; my days are short; but my heart would have told me if I erred. I cannot regret, I will pray that it may end well."

After they were gone he went and paced restlessly by the river.

"I did not like that servant's face," he muttered.

In what he said of the shortness of his days the old minister was strangely right. How brief they were to be he did not know, he died on his homeward journey across the plains not six days from that night and was buried by the trail, with the other pioneers who made a longer journey than they

ever dreamed when they set out full of hope and ambition.

That happy week! Virginia saw Roy often. There was a balcony at her window, Rose played the nurse, and the drama of Romeo and Juliet as old as the world, was played again to end in darkness and despair. The week ended and Roy went beyond the plains to fight for the Union, and Virginia, like all women in war time, was left to mourn and wait for news that came so slowly across the dreary waste.

In midwinter, Rose McCord wrote Roy a letter of which Virginia never knew. Then the woman waited and planned for the trouble she knew must come.

The old Judge had been much occupied that winter, Dwight was in the mountains, the fine dinners had been less frequent, but in March the Judge resolved to give a banquet to the leading Denver people. Then he recollected he had not seen his daughter for a month except at breakfast, she having one excuse or another, either illness or painting, or something, and indeed for the past month he had been away on law business a great deal; so the day before the banquet he went up to his daughter's room. She was lying on a sofa by an open window for the soft March air was like summer. She gathered the fur rug about her as he opened the door and lay back on the couch, white and frightened.

"You're not ill, Virginia?" he said, kindly. "Gad,

how pale you are, and those circles under your eyes! It does not agree with you here."

"No," she answered half hopefully—"I would be better East. I can hardly breathe here. I think the climate does not agree with me. I am tortured by nervous fears and dread."

"It seems so," he said, indifferently. "Well, I'll think it over; but to-morrow you must be your old self—lady-like and agreeable. Put on your prettiest gown and your mother's diamonds, you remind me of her at times very strongly."

"My mother," gasped the girl strangely. "If she had lived!"

"Why, Virginia, you're ungrateful," cried her father petulantly. "Haven't I given you every care and luxury and watched over you, and tried to be a mother and father too?"

"Yes, yes," Virginia went on hurriedly, pressing her lips to his hand. "Dear father, I have been an ungrateful child—undutiful."

"Not a bit, not a bit," he said fondly, "my brave little girl—pure as a lily and proud. She shall be the greatest lady in Colorado some day."

He stooped and kissed her, noticing that her forehead was burning hot.

"Look your best to-morrow, pet, I like to show these ignorant people what good breeding is. By-by. Don't come to dinner if you're not well. Sam shall bring you a dainty little feast. I'll look after it myself."

Then, he went down the stairs humming a song, and the girl, half mad, wild with shame and remorse flung herself on the floor, tore her hair and looked with burning eyes that would not weep and tried to speak with parched lips from which no words came.

She heard them in the morning making preparations for the banquet, like a criminal with sentence of death hanging over her, she watched the slow hours creep by. At last she got up, and Rose helped her dress. She put on a black velvet that had been her mother's. It fell in rich folds about her and Rose draped a black shawl over her, then Virginia put on her mother's diamonds, shuddering as she did so.

"Why you look like a dowager," said her father, angrily, when she came down a few moments before the guests arrived. "Where is your blue dress with the white lace—that is girlish and suitable."

"It was torn," she faltered, and just then the guests arrived.

The banquet passed off without a jar, everybody was pleased and admired Miss Wallace to her father's content; but one sharp-featured woman, on taking her leave, said as she tied her bonnet strings in the parlor—"Your da'ter hain't a merried woman, is she, Judge Wallace?"

"No, indeed," said the Judge, smiling with patronizing condescension—"She's a slip of a girl yet, little more than nineteen. I could not spare her for a good many years to come."

"Oh, indeed," snapped Mrs. Collins grasping her husband's arm—he had been very attentive on the fair young hostess—"Wal, you'd oughter be proud of her!"

What the woman said occurred to the Judge again. It tormented him; what did she mean? His daughter a married woman! Virginia was ill for a week after the banquet. He saw her every day. She would not have a doctor, yet he could see she grew daily worse. He decided, notwithstanding her prejudices against the dubious physicians who might attempt to practice in the new country, to call in one. Then a thought struck him. He rang the bell for Sam.

"Go tell Rose McCord to come here," he said—Sam came back a minute later Rose with him. When Sam was out of the room Rose picked up the corner of her apron and began to cry.

"What is the matter with your mistress?" the Judge asked sharply. "You don't think she's going to die. Is that what you're crying for?"

"Oh no, sir," sobbed Rose.

"Then what is the matter with Virginia?" he cried, exasperated.

"I daren't tell!" Rose stammered, and fled from the room.

Judge Wallace staggered to a chair. His head was dizzy—he put his hand up to his eyes. He tried to think. The blood seemed rushing through his brain. Was he going to have a stroke of apo-

plexy? He tried to calm himself. What did Rose mean—what did that woman mean? Then he burst open the door and rushed up-stairs like a madman.

Three hours afterward when Dwight came home, he and his father were closeted together a long time. Then Dwight mounted his horse and rode madly to Denver without noticing that he passed on his way a man hurrying to the Judge's house. Old Sam was posted at the door; when he saw the new-comer he turned almost gray in his horror.

"'Fore God, tain't you, Mas'r Roy?" he gasped.

"Yes Sam. Virginia, where is she?"

"Locked in her room; awful doings heah now, sah." Then Sam told what he knew, afterward he crept up the winding stairs in that house where there was almost the hush of death, opened the door of Miss Virginia's room and told her who was below. The girl dressed in her long blue wrapper, followed him like a shadow until she reached the hall door where he stood, her lover—her husband.

There was one happy moment—one that came back like a vision in all the painful future—the one moment when he held her to his breast. Then a door opened and her father rushed out—white with rage he struck at Roy, tried to curse him—and fell in a fit at her feet; then there was the galloping of horses and Dwight dashed up; the light of the hall lamp lit up the scene. He saw his father apparently lifeless in old Sam's arms, his sister clinging to the man who had brought shame upon them. He rushed up the step.

"Coward! sneak!" he shouted, "die like a hound!"

Half to protect the woman clinging to him, Roy drew his own pistol. There was a flash, a terrible sound, followed by a moan, and Dwight fell backward down the steps, while Roy wavered a moment, then without a cry fell at Virginia's feet, his warm blood dabbling her dress. Dwight's pistol had fired Roy's. He never meant to shoot his wife's brother. Virginia, the cause of it all, fainted and knew no more for weary days that merged into weeks.

When she came to herself the first face she saw was Rose McCord's.

"Has it been a dream, Rose?" she asked faintly.

"If it only had a been," answered Rose mournfully. Then Virginia saw she had on a black dress and looked pale and worn.

"Have I been sick long?" Virginia said timidly.

"Three weeks, lacking three days. They thought you'd die; the child is dead."

"If I had! If I had!" Virginia moaned. Will my father see me? Will he come here? Just to hear me speak a few words?"

"I'll call him," said Rose. "He wanted to see you when you was sensible."

Virginia listened with beating heart, and it seemed as if her father's very tread was different. There was a sternness in every step. He looked at her coldly when he came in, as if she were a stranger. He stood at the foot of her bed, his arms folded.

"Well what have you to say?" he said, harshly.

"Only that Roy was my husband," cried Virginia. "We were privately married. I have my certificate. Rose was our witness."

"Your maid—your confederate," sneered the Judge. "No certificate could be found, nor was the man, the minister you mentioned in your ravings, ever heard of here. It was all a lie. Well, the man is dead—carrion—shot by your brother, who saved the honor of his family but lost his own life. Both my sons buried here," said the old Judge brokenly, his white head drooping, his lips quivering. Then Virginia noticed that her father had suddenly grown aged and feeble. "Both my sons dead, my brave, noble sons, and such a thing as you left! God pity me! Don't speak. From this time till I die no word to you will ever pass my lips. You have disgraced me here—yet here will I stay. I will see no one, have no one come here until I am dead, and you shall feel that you—you alone—have cut off from me every hope, every ambition—left me a wreck—left me childless—dishonored in my old age. This may serve to keep you from new lovers, to hold you back until I am gone. Never from this moment speak to me nor look at me—I am no more your father! The house is big enough for us to live apart, and apart we will live as long as there is breath in my body."

Then her father left her, and Virginia, stunned and heart-broken, saw the long years lying far be-

fore her as dreary and monotonous as the barren plains under the scorching sun.

CHAPTER III

THE MACDONALD HOUSEHOLD.

"How fleet the works of men, back to the earth again,
Ancient and holy things fade like a dream,"

muttered old Johnny MacDonald as he staggered along through the streets of Denver one night two years after Virginia Wallace had lost husband and brother and a father's love. "But the works uv men'll last 'em out. My work'll outlast me—done a heap on it, 'n tarnel hard work crawling out on judgment day, for I sodded 'em deep. Mac," he went on with drunken gravity as he tracked along the uneven street that boasted as yet no sidewalk: "Mac, you're jestin' on 'ligion—tain't good taste—'ligion's treated due respect. They wants sidewalks here. Council be ——. Road's good nuff for me. Arsked me my 'pinion. 'Feller citizens,' I sez, 'when I go down to Bowen's saloon one plank'll do me—when I go back home two planks hain't big 'nuff.' My pronunciation's ruined. I was well eddicated. I'm Oxford man. Look at me now. Sunk to this level, diggin' graves for dead-beats. That's what the rum power does."

"Hi, Mac!" called a party of miners passing. The grave-digger, much insulted by their familiarity, sat

down by a deserted adobe hut and wept copiously.

"I'm pretty drunk when I get to the water stage," he said, sagely, "'n' less Mary comes there won't be no MacDonald to respond to his Julia's call. Them steps is a paralyzer." While he sat there a quick change from light to darkness took place. There is no twilight in Colorado—once the sun is gone night comes like a black shadow. Along the crooked, uneven streets of Denver were mud huts, loghouses, saloons built of wood, some decent residences and stores, a church and more saloons. In fact, the saloons seemed to be the most popular part of the town. A few grand old cottonwoods, the growth of centuries, towered above the village, dumb reminders of its peaceful past before the pioneer's axe echoed along the Platte. Groups of roughly clothed, bearded men went from one saloon to another or gathered in crowds outside some door. Women—now the great ladies of Denver—stood in their doorways and gossiped with their neighbors; all calico clad, and many of them still wearing the gingham sunbonnets they were seldom without in the day-time. Here and there a woman's figure slunk into a saloon. The wretched creatures are always in a new settlement, a rank growth of the frontier. Playing in the sand of the road, or whooping and yelling in blindman's buff or puss-in-the-corner, were lots of dirty, ragged youngsters now the heiresses and rich men of a great city. Everybody was talking of the funeral that day, and many were the

comments and speculations about it. The people of Denver were neglected—not one had been invited —the minister was the only one who was admitted, and he, to use a territorial expression, "was as close-mouthed as an oyster." Mrs. Collins, who had great interest in all the affairs of the settlement and was a weekly edition of society news, made up her mind that when it was a little darker she would run up to MacDonald's to find out all about it, and no one would be the wiser.

MacDonald's residence was a filthy loft over a grocery store. Near it was a large cottonwood affording shade and coolness, and so situated was his abode that the river ran within easy walking distance. This was pleasant for, though neither MacDonald nor his housekeeper was addicted to water as a beverage, or as a preventative of dirt, yet it as consoling to know water was accessible. A steep flight of steps outside the store led to his house, and these steps with a shaky handrail were a source of much hardship and some danger to MacDonald and his housekeeper.

Mac leaned his head against the adobe wall of the hut and went peacefully to sleep, while a few hungry rats sniffed at him, and a vagabond dog—no one knows how he crossed the plains, but foremost in the advance of civilization this vagabond dog has always been found—sat beside him in good fellowship. By and by, a slight, childish figure glided down the street, looking into one saloon

after another. Bowen's windows were too high, so she flung open the door, and went in. The crowd of men gambling and drinking, with noisy laughter and vulgar jests, did not frighten her. She called a few women by name. "Hullo, Sal! Hullo, Jin!" in a shrill, childish voice, then she went up to the bar. Her head just came to the top of the counter. She looked about nine years old, stunted and undersized. Her face was thin and dirty; her light hair hung in long straight locks, that seldom knew a comb, she had on a mere rag of a gown, as filthy and unkempt as her general appearance. She shuffled along in a pair of Julia's gaiters, but her thin legs were bare and bruised. Still the bright dark eyes that peered over the counter were beautiful, and perhaps if Mary MacDonald had been the child of loving parents she might have been sweet and attractive. She rapped a skinny, claw-like hand on the counter:

"Hi, Bowen!" she yelled shrilly. A fat, red-faced man, with a diamond stud in his wide expanse of shirt-front, rested his aldermanic stomach against the counter looking down on the mite.

"Wal, Mary?" he said kindly.

"Pap bin here? Julier's madder 'n Injuns. I'll get licked ef I don't git him home."

"Went out an hour ago," answered Bowen regretfully. "'Tis too bad they lick yer so, Mary. Yer hain't a bad gurl. Show 'em yer arm now."

Mary turned to a table of men and pulled up her

tattered sleeve. The poor little arm was black and blue in big, round spots while across below her elbow were deep red gashes. Those rough men were dumb with horror.

"It's a durned shame," cried Sal McGinnis, a big, blonde girl. "Here, Mary, me dear, take it," forcing a bracelet on the skinny arm. "I'm ded broke or I'd give ye money" Sal knew bracelets consoled her in times of peace after a war. Mary shook the bracelet up and down her arm.

"Durn purty, she said, handing it back with a sigh. "Jule 'ud git it, though, 'n more lickins 'ud foller; 'bliged to yer."

"Drink this, petite," urged a fat little Frenchwoman, very gay in bright colors with much dubious jewelry. "You look hungry. It will warm you. Pauvre, petite."

"T'won't make me lushy, will't?" asked Mary cautiously; "two drinkers is enuff in one fam'ly, 'n yer don't know wot them stairs is."

"It's half water," said Sal, forcing it on the child. Mary took the mug and with a knowing wink at the company tossed it down at a gulp.

"It's good 'n warmin'," she said, wiping her mouth with the hem of her dress, "but it's wot's stunted my growth—made me leetle. I'll swear off some day. Bon jer!" in sarcastic imitation of the Frenchwoman.

"Bon soir," corrected the Frenchwoman; amid the laughter Mary slammed the door and went out.

"He's by Flint's old hut," said a miner passing her in the darkness, recognizing the familiar little figure on the usual errand. So Mary found her father. She woke him up, and patted the dog. Then followed by the canine, now devoted till death, the two went down to Dodge's store.

"You hain't been drinking, Mary," asked Mac suspiciously, as he halted at the foot of the stairs.

"Yer smell yer own breath," said Mary with great contempt; alternately boosting and hauling, all the while uttering shrill oaths and keeping up an angry scolding, she got him to the top of the stairs. Then she opened the door and he stumbled into an unplastered room with rough board floor and dirty windows. This room was modestly divided into sections by canvas curtains. There was a kitchen, where there was a stove, a dining-room that had a table and boxes for seats; three bed rooms, with a heap of dirty blankets in each, and lastly the parlor containing three chairs, a box and a china vase on a shelf on the wall. This vase Mary thought was the most precious and most beautiful thing she had ever seen.

Julia Mullen, whom Mac termed his housekeeper, was a thin, tall woman, with large, pale blue eyes, and a scant growth of mud-colored hair, beginning at such a distance from her eyebrows that her dome-like forehead gave her the appearance of a bald eagle. Her teeth were mostly gone, only a few dark tusks showed when she smiled, and her skin,

browned and wrinkled from exposure and intemperance, was like an Indian's. Her dress was of calico, but long use had deprived it of all color and shape. She dished up a rabbit on the dining-room table while Mary waited on them.

"It is an honored custom in the country where my ancestors lived, my Julia," said Mac, lifting his fork in an uncertain way, as if he felt there might be difficulty in finding his mouth, "ter make the daughter of the house wait on the noble guests, eh? I'm 'n honored guest. Mary, daughter —logic —therefore—"

"Eat yer dinner or yer'll never git through," snapped Julia, inattentively. "Yer git longer-winded every time yer full."

Mac's good-humored face with its shock of reddish hair and dark eyes took on a submissive look, as he said with great admiration and animation:

"Julia, you'd overturn the tribunals of ansunt Rome. What a Herodias you'd make abringin' a hed on a platter."

"Yer git along 'n quit listenin'," said Julia, anxious to vent her angry feelings on some one. She threw a potato at the child, who dodged, and it struck instead the vase in the "parler." The potato was hard and the vase fell on the floor, breaking into a hundred pieces.

"Yer made me do't, yer jade," cried the woman, purple with rage. "I'll break every bone in yer body!"

"I never meaned it," sobbed Mary, trembling so she could hardly stand. "I'd never dodged ef I'd knowed it. Ye hove the 'tater yerself."

"Run, Mary," called Mac, composedly eating his rabbit. The child started, but Julia sprang after her, caught her by the shoulder, pulled her hair, scratched her face, and then opening the door flung the child down the steep stairs.

"What have you done!" cried Mac sobered by the sound of the falling body and by the low moans. "They'll hang us both."

"We kin say she fell," muttered Julia holding the man back. "Sh—sh—she's runnin' off. Can't be bad hurt. She'll come back. No such luck as ter kill her. Hullo, sum'uns comin'. Who kin it be?"

Just then the door opened, and a great, handsome woman, well dressed, came in, followed by a woman carrying a child, while a small man brought up in the rear.

"Why, Rose McCord!" cried Julia, much pleased. "Sure, its an honor when you come to our humble abode. Set in the parlor—Mac, bring in some seats outer the dinin'-room. Yer men'll hev ter set jest outside the parlor, tain't mor'n big 'nuff fur us ladies ter be comfurnable in. Now, Rose darlin', who's the lady that's got eyes loike ye, an' seems eenmost nuff similer to ye ter be the same stock? And the foine lookin' gintlemin? Sure I'd know now he's a man uv prop'ty."

"He's got some," answered Rose graciously. "This

is Miss Mullen, my friend Mrs. Johnson and Mr. Johnson, and that gentleman's Mr. MacDonald. I believe that is all. My friends have just come out here Mr. Johnson's, a nephew of the Johnson who died up at Desperation Gulch. He's going to work the claim."

"My name's Missus, please," said Julia with becoming meekness. "In this new town it's best ter begin right about sich things, though Miss an' Missus hain't so fur diff'rent as spelin' is concarned as might be—but, laws, harf the foks come outer here 'thout their rale name bein' knowed, an' I don't go inter c'iety hardly enny, it bein' so mixed and promiscus like."

"I know jest how 'tis," said Mrs. Johnson sympathetically—a coarse, large-featured woman with an ugly, sullen face. Mr. Johnson was meagre, with small weazined face and little black eyes under shaggy eyebrows.

"Is that yer little gurl, now?" asked Mrs. Mullen. as Mrs. Johnson with an energetic push sent the child who was clinging to her skirts outside the canvas curtain.

"Yes, the only one left of seven, and troublesome she is."

"Purty, though," simpered Mrs. Mullen, "them dark blue eyes an' yeller curls must look sum'at as I done at her age. I was a rale blonde, mother allus said, 'n my hair was like corn silk."

"I'd believe it," said Mrs. Johnson enthusiasti-

cally, for just at that moment MacDonald produced a generous looking bottle and collected a number of tin-cups.

"None for me," said Rose trying to conceal her disgust, for the cups were dirty and one she saw had been used to keep a comb and hairpins in. "I never drink whisky; it hurts my heart in this climate."

"There's more for us," grinned Mac with a feeble attempt to be jovial.

"Mac, yer wulger, indade," snapped Julia, already in her second cup. "Folks'll think hard of ye, 'n it'll reflect on me, wot's hed two turns at bordin' school, 'n the extras ter."

These "two turns" at boarding school were fictions that Mrs. Mullen had grown to believe in form repeating constantly. Her mother had done clear-starching for the young ladies at a seminary and Julia had carried the clothes back and forth.

"Julia's a thoroughbred," said Mac with a drunken leer. "She's 'n ornament to Denver. Speaking of Denver makes me think of when West Denver was Auraria 'stid of Denver. The boys could always tell how far gone I was by getting me to say Auraria; when I got to saying Au-ra-ra-ra-r-er, then they knowed I was a gone case. Queer how a little thing'll show the workings of a marster mind."

"You've got a mind above your business," smiled Rose. "You a grave-digger now."

"An' that makes me think of the funeral to-day,"

said Mac with a tipsy bow. "Queerest one I ever saw. I drove my wagon over to Highlands along with the box for the stiff. All the one there was the parson and a nigger--old Sam, and he and I laid the corpse in the box—and the box was as handsome as it could be made here. The Judge didn't weigh a hundred, and a grim old corpse he was. Angels never laid out to welcome him I'll bet. Well, I set out and held the plugs, but I could peep in the house and there sot Sam and a nigger wench, Miss Rose here all in black and nigh her another woman with a wale over her face, which I took to be the daughter by her walk and the way she set. There was good blood in those Wallaces if they did pan out so bad."

"Go on," said Rose impatiently, "what else did you see?"

"Only the parson preaching, then we took the body out to the wagon. The Judge left word he didn't want any pall-bearers. I've heard he never got over that row there and his son's murder."

"He never did," answered Rose; "he changed from the moment of the disgrace, he never spoke to Virginia after it. He shut her out from his room and died without seeing her, but the fool forgot and never made a will, so all the money's hers, and she's rich."

"I don't see why he was a fool not to make a will leaving her out," said Mac, suspiciously. "A father ought to stand by his own young ones."

"Oh, yer talk," cried Mrs. Mullen, with asperity. "Words is plenty, talk's cheap. Yer wan't niver given ter carrin' fer yer young'uns. Look't Mary, now, 'n yer sed yer run off from Scotland 'n left a wife 'n boy."

"I did, Juliet, I did—cusses on this venerable head," said Mac; "was married to an angel. I was the other sort. I spent her money and I tried to teach her to enjoy it, but she was too angelic, so when the money was gone I lit out—to use the expressive language of this region. I never heard of her from that day to this. She was a lady born like the Wallace woman, but my wife wa'n't like her. She was a chunk of ice, hard and unforgiving. Lord how she'd play on the pianner and paint. My tastes was always low; I'm as happy now as I ever was in my fine house. I'd ruther see life, I'd ruther— " finished Mac with a concluding burst of eloquence, "be a wild antelope a galloping over the plain then be a stall-fed ox!"

"But your boy's name?" cried Rose with suppressed excitement, "and is MacDonald your own name?"

"I never knowed what he was called," answered Mac, filling his cup; "he was a kid in arms when I skipped. MacDonald is my own name—and my forefather's—

> "One of the few, the immortal names,
> That were not born to die."

"I can quote volumes of poetry after another

glass. Julia, you've had your share. Give me a drink! I come, fair Rose, from Newcastle on the Tyne. I wandered into Scottish lands, I wedded a chieftain's daughter.

"To see her is to love her,
And love but her forever."

"Hain't yer going to tell us 'bout the quality's funeral?" said Mrs. Johnson, in that stage of liquor to feel a grievance keenly.

"Bless your interestingface!" answered Mac, filling the lady's cup; "to proceed. I drove the old man to the boneyard—which is Western for graveyard—Miss Wallace and the parson followed me in the family carriage, then Miss Rose here and the nigger woman in a wagon. After the old man was planted and tucked in warm, which I does with a spade, the parson walks back to town and the wagon drives off, old Sam waits with the family carriage in the road while the Missus comes up to me and says:"

"Says?" repeated Rose, leaning her chin on her large white hand and devouring the man with her eyes.

"'Mister Mac,'—she thought my name was that, hearing me called by it,—'Did you ever bury a man here who was shot by my brother; MacDonald was his name?' "

"I led the lady to a sorter little knoll up the hill. It had been a long time since he was buried, and grass and flowers had growed all over his grave."

"'I know the very place,' I says, 'here; his name was sum'at the same as mine, marm, and I'm a clannish man. Therefore, though I couldn't plant him with the quality folks what paid for their land, I put him there by himself away from them that died with their boots on—which is refined concealment in language for saying they were hung. And away from the paupers that had none to care where they was buried.'

"She didn't speak but put money in my hand and went to the grave. She stayed there a long time, a black, sorrowful figure, and I pitied her. It seemed as if she couldn't cry, that she had lost all her tears years ago. Then she came back to me.

"'You saw him?' she says.

"'Oh yes,' I answers. "A fine, handsome corpse, peaceful-looking, and dressed in regimentals.

"'Peaceful-looking,' she repeats over to herself: 'I'm not bound now. I will make his grave bloom like a garden.' With that—forgetting probably she'd give me money afore—she slid a couple more gold pieces in my hand and walks off. I come home and had a little toning up after the ordeal, which is all I can tell you about the funeral."

Just then uncertain footsteps came up the stairs and poor little Mary, her face discolored and bloody from her fall, limping painfully, slid into the room and went into one of the canvas-walled bed-rooms, where little Jane tumbled on the heap of blankets was sound asleep.

"Is that your own child, Mr. MacDonald?" asked Rose.

"I don't know exactly how to answer your inquiry," said Mac with much dignity and a great effort to steady himself on a pair of tottering legs. "She is after a fashion; perhaps she might be called an indiscretion. Some years ago I married a lady with convivial habits and some property, and this is our child. Still, if my first lady was alive and was alive at the time—

'But still within my bosom's core,
Shall live my Highland Mary.'"

"Mrs. Johnson wanted a child to take with her to the Gulch to look after Jane," said Rose, rising to go. "The girl she brought from the east died on the way. Could you let her have Mary?"

She's such a little creature," said Mrs. Johnson fretfully. Mr. Johnson made no remark. After the liquor was served he had slept peacefully through the call.

"She's a good worker, though," put in Mrs. Mullen, eagerly. "Never tired, hain't got no sassy ways, neither. He'll let her go."

"The country air would do Mary good," said Mac, with an expression of deep anxiety. "The dissipation of the city makes her pale and wan and wilts the roses on her cheek. But her outfit must be considered. She has not the wardrobe to go on a journey. If I mistake not that calico slip—which from exceeding lankness, or rather skimpiness, con-

veys the impression that she has little or no clothing underneath it, and those gaiters, which once held the delicate feet of my Juliet, my mullen—why not hollyhock—my chrysanthemum, are all my Mary's personal effects. Her defects are unfortunately within; we can not remedy them."

"You mean," said Rose, curtly, "that you want money for the child. You would sell your interest in her. Mr. Johnson's wagons are below; I hear the driver shouting. It's moonlight, so he goes to-night. I have no time to bandy words. I'll answer for Mr. Johnson, who sleeps like a dead man proving the goodness of your liquor. Will ten dollars do?"

"It will," answered Julia decisively. "If it don't why then Mac kin git board sum where else, I hain't goin' ter 'sport him an' the brat both. Giv' me the money, I'll take it."

Rose put it in the woman's hand. Mac, overcome by the last cup, dropped his head on his outstretched arms, neither knowing nor caring what would be done now, in a happy state, the final stage of drunkenness with him.

"Come," said Rose looking into the bedroom. "Bring the child. You're to go with this kind lady."

"Never come back no more?" asked Mary, with wide eyes unable to believe the good news.

"Never," said Rose. "See that you work hard. Bring Jane."

Rose followed Mrs. Mullen down; after them came Mrs. Johnson much flustered from her exer-

tions in waking Mr. Johnson, and lastly Mary, carrying the child—such a heavy weight for the poor little arms. Mary stopped a moment at the door then crept back to her father.

"Pap, pap, say good-by; you'll never see me no more."

He muttered something harsh in his drunken sleep, and pushed her away. Tears came into her sad eyes—so used to tears—but she staggered bravely across the floor.

"Air yer niver comin'?" yelled Mrs. Mullen, longing to give her a farewell blow.

"Yeah," said Mary, taking a new hold of the child. This woke little Jane. She wound her fat arms around her bearer's neck and smiled up in the poor, thin face.

"I love 'ou," she lisped in her sweet baby faith.

Mary, scarce comprehending her new found joy, to be loved, to be kissed by this sweet baby, to care for her, to guard her with her life, held her closer, and panting and trembling for fear she should let her fall, went down the rickety stairs she would never climb again.

CHAPTER IV

DESPERATION GULCH

Cherry Creek runs through Denver and empties into the Platte. Its sands are rich with gold, and in the early days of Colorado miners swarmed along its banks panning for the shining dust. Some forty miles up the creek there had been large finds, and here was what might be called a boom, for a large number of men were working and they had built cabins and the usual saloon. The place was wild and picturesque; a deep valley hedged in with rocky hills, covered by a dense growth of pine. Down the valley were numberless sandy creeks—dry beds most of the year but just now full to overflowing from rains. All was life and bustle. On each side of the creeks were lines of men swashing pans that glinted in the sun. On some claims were wooden cradles or rockers that rocked the baser stuff away, saving the black sand and gold. Notwithstanding the many men, there was no noisy talk and laughter. All was breathless hope and labor, and fever for gain that soft spring day in Desperation Gulch. One of the sandy creeks was named for a curious old man who came there in '56 and delved and dug and hoped till his heart broke. He died six months

before, with faith there was rich mineral on his land though never to be found by him. No one worked "Old man Johnson's" claim this busy day. There is a strong spirit of honor among miners otherwise lawless. They would not wash one panful of the sand on that dead man's land, nor would they open the unlocked door of his log cabin, standing silent and lonely half way up a pine clad hill—a little path running from it down to the creek; a path worn by weary feet coming each day to new disappointment and despair. Johnson's claim lay vacant, waiting for his nephew to come. The old man had written hopefully of his land and his prospective wealth, desired his nephew to carry on his work and find what he had sought so long. The miners knew there was a nephew, and the claim was as safe as if a guard were standing over it all the time.

Below Johnson's claim, on the same creek, was Henry Curtis' claim, and here two men were working. The two claims were hidden from the rest by a small rise or mound. One of these workers was a thick-set man with reddish hair and beard and shifty, evil, eyes. His face was tanned and scarred, his hair and beard unkempt. His red flannel shirt was dirty and ragged, his long boots, half covering filthy overalls, were worn and full of holes. The other man's clothes were of good material, his decent blue flannel shirt was clean and whole, and a gold watch-chain hung from his belt, that also held a bowie-knife and revolver. His face was thin, his

chin pointed, his lips scarlet, a mere thread; his skin was a pale olive, the sun only turned darker. His eyes black and small, were hidden by heavy lids seldom raised far enough to show the pupils. A carefully trimmed black mustache covered his evil mouth, and hanging over his shoulders was long, black hair straight as an Indian's. It was noticeable that though the other man puffed and panted, this man worked without any apparent effort; even on his high shining forehead there was no sign of perspiration.

"Curse me ef I see how you kin stoop here and work a forenoon stiddy and never straighten up your back nor stop to breathe," said the red-bearded man, dropping his pan to mop his forehead.

"It's a science, Tom," said the other. "I mean to get rich and enjoy my money. You won't enjoy your money. Somebody else will, for you may get rich, but you'll be too worn out to spend it. You are working for posterity, I for prosperity."

"Mebbe you got your science where you had to," sneered Tom.

"Wrong, my friend," said the dark man, just showing his teeth in a half smile that gave him the look of a snarling wolf. His lips were so thin that to smile he merely drew up his upper one a trifle. The effect was horrible and made Curtis dreaded and disliked by the miners, who counted his presence in a camp a misfortune.

"I never was in prison," said the dark man throw-

ing himself on his back, locking his arms under his head, and looking up to the blue sky. "I may have deserved it, but I escaped. I'm a descendant of a fine old fellow of Puritan stock. My father married a French Canadian, a tigerish creature. I was the pledge of their unhappy union. Father died suddenly, mysteriously, leaving some money. *Ma mere* educated me. I graduated at Harvard with high honors; then I married the daughter of a very decent old Bostoner, a rich ship owner. You've seen my wife over the hill, eh, and the boy? I forged father-in-law's name to a check. *Ma mere* gave me money to come here, and her curse also, a warning to keep out of reach of the law. He thinks I fled abroad. He'd forgive me and pay me well if I would give up the wife and boy. The old villain would make a hermit of me. That's the story! Oh, not all, perhaps. In Kansas, a quarrel over cards, a man said I cheated—one man the less. Maybe, the poor devil spoke the truth. But the truth is offensive at times—brutally so. Brooks, my friend—your name is so pastoral, reminds me of the woods and glens under a summer's sky—you and I will make fame and fortune yet."

"We've been here over four years and hain't seen nothing so far," said Brooks, sullenly. He was sitting with his elbows on his knees looking idly at old Johnson's log hut. Curtis raised himself on his arm and looked also at the hill and cabin.

"You and I, Brooks, will buy that claim and that cabin."

"What for?" muttered Brooks, ungraciously. "Johnson never made no millions on it."

"Johnson was a fool," said the other, a bright light coming into his snaky eyes. He leaned forward and said in a hoarse whisper: "I'll not look along this barren creek for grains of gold, nor dig in fool efforts to find a nugget, nor creep along some other man's land to find, higher up, a source. This gold may come from the tops of the mountains for all we know. Johnson's claim is the head of this creek, yet he found no more gold than we; every rain in the spring that fills these courses leaves more and more gold, and where does it come from? Pah, I've thought of it till I'm sick with the idea. No Brooks, I'll tear down that hut, I'll go to the bowels of the earth, I'll wrest the secret that hill hides—silver, man, silver!"

Breathless, Brooks waited till the end, then he sprang to his feet, trembling with eagerness.

"Now, Curtis, now—No time to waste. You speak like a prophet, I know it's there! Why wait and lose it all? Some one else will find it. More are coming every day. There'll be other smart ones 'mongst 'em."

"These men here will stop us. They will insist the land belongs to Johnson's nephew. We are not popular and some fine day you and I would be dangling on one of those pine trees, fruit for the magpies to peck at. I will by fraud or force wrest that land from the new man. He'll be green and easy

to gull. There's our hope, man. Not a hope but a surety."

"And there," said Brooks with malevolent look and muttered curse, "is the new man that yer to work on, who's to make us rich or poorer than we be now!"

Curtis looked in the direction he indicated, and saw descending the hill toward the log hut a white-covered wagon drawn by two bony old horses who stumbled painfully over the pine stumps and uneven places in the rough road as if their strength had been exhausted by a long journey.

A lank, overgrown youth jumped out of the wagon first, then Mr. Johnson, skinny and sober—a much worse man than Mr. Johnson drunk—then Mrs. Johnson, portly and red-faced, showing some liberality in display of a red petticoat, white cotton stockings, and cloth gaiters; then a pale, thin child lifting out a fat baby some two or three years old, and being smartly cuffed for her awkwardness. Poor Mary found she had only changed one hard task mistress for another, for Mrs. Johnson's idea of a servant was one of small size, with an ear in easy cuffable reach, and of so shrinking a nature as to bear abuse without complaint.

"There's enough of 'em," said Brooks gloomily.

"It does look discouraging," said Curtis, "but my calculations are that the family consists of the stout lady who seems to be the head, the oldish man, probably her husband, and the little ones, probably

their children. However, I won't borrow trouble. Let's take a half-holiday anyway."

So they diappeared, and the Johnsons remained sole occupants of the claim. The next day the teamster and team went away, for they were only hired, and Mr. Johnson, in miner's clothing, with the air of a proprietor, came down to his claim. To Curtis' surprise he knew how to wash for gold and manifested no verdancy at all. Besides, he was uncommunicative and distant, showing no desire to get acquainted. In a few days the following sign, painted in large black letters, sent a thrill of expectation and a general warmth down the valley for the saloon was a mile away over the hills:

"Liker Sold Hear."

Poor old Johnson's path was well worn now and curved and crooked like the walk of the customers who came down.

"Looks like them Johnsons is goin' ter run the Gulch," cried Brooks, savagely, as day after day passed and business grew brisker up the path and Johnson worked away steadily down the path on his claim.

"You'll never be a great man; you can't wait, Brooks," said Curtis quietly, not a whit upset or turned aside from his purpose.

Little Jane was a great pet among the miners, but few of them ever saw Mary. The child lived in the kitchen where she scrubbed and cooked and even washed for the miners, for Mrs. Johnson was

not above making an honest penny when she could. With tasks far beyond her strength, Mary had yet a bitterer burden. Mr. Johnson, when sober, was in a chronic state of malice and viciousness, and he would beat her. Mrs. Johnson, when drunk—for she generally was in that state now, as bartender and of the fair sex, being subject to treats from generous customers—was irritable and, needing some one to vent her ill-humor and temper on, took Mary. Often Jane suffered, but Mary saved her when she could and bore on her thin shoulders deep red marks that might have bruised the soft flesh of the little child.

Winter came on and the miners left the Gulch for the village over the hill and took up their quarters for the season. Thus a source of revenue was cut off from the Gulch, and the sign mournfully appealed to the pines that whispered soft condolence. Mr. Johnson, finding drink more agreeable than food, worked himself into a kind of torpid state where a certain quantity of liquor kept him in a condition of sleepy serenity the fire comfort enhanced, Mrs. Johnson seldom spared the bottle, and she indulged at times in such maniacal outbursts of rage Mary often fled for her life. The poor children slept in an upper loft, their covering a few filthy gunny sacks, for the more liquor Mrs. Johnson got the meaner she became. All the food the children had was the broken scraps left from the Johnson's table, and once when frying mush Mary stole a slice

she was beaten insensible by the furious woman.

Mary, still in that tattered calico, with bare legs and bare arms, hatless, without even a shawl, gathered wood on the piney hills, and Jane helped her. Pitiful baby Jane, grown thin and lank—a bony little creature with big sorrowful blue eyes and soft yellow curls her faithful friend curled with her fingers. Cold little Jane in her ragged cape and torn shoes. Sometimes when there came those soft warm days that come in midwinter in Colorado, and are full of the breath of spring, the two poor mites would curl up in a sunny spot, by a gnarled old pine, warm their half frozen arms in the bright sunshine and cuddle close together, forgetting their sorrows. One day they were sitting there, when they heard the bushes snap and break; Mary, too frightened to move, thinking it was Mrs. Johnson, clung to Jane, who had fallen asleep. Instead of the harsh, brutal woman, a little lad near Mary's age, came out of the woods, and looked at them with big brown eyes shining with surprise.

"Why, you poor little things," he cried, aın't you the babes in the woods, and didn't the robins cover you with leaves?"

"Who be you?" asked Mary, aggressively.

"I'm Captain William Hawley Curtis, named after gran'father, in Boston, who owns ships that sail on the water like—like everything. Me and my mother lives over there. We come 'cross the plains in a wagon."

"WILLY, GIVE THEM YOUR LUNCHEON," SAID THE LADY.—P. 57.

"So did I," said Mary, much interested; "ours had oxen."

"Ours had horses—good ones," said Willy. "We saw Injuns, too."

"So'd we, an' they fired at us, too."

"Who's she?" whispered Willy, peeping into Jane's sleeping face. "Your sister?"

"I hain't none. She's Jane; lives where I wurks. I kin wash, 'n iron, 'n cook."

"Mother, mother, here's two little lost girls," shouted William Hawley, running to the bushes, where a lady was struggling to get through; "ain't they funny? See, the baby's waking up!"

"What pretty blue eyes!"

The lady was thin and slight, much wasted by illness and mental suffering. Her brown eyes looked unearthly, they were so large in her sunken face. She coughed and put up a bony hand to her breast before she could speak; then she spoke to Mary. Mary, nothing loth, told all her history and Jane's, and Jane waking up made herself very popular with Willy and his mother.

"Willy, give them your luncheon," said the lady; "I know they would like it."

The lad without a word took a slice of bread and butter from his pocket and handed it to Mary, who gave it all but the hard crusts to Jane.

"Jane's hungry," she said, apologetically, "but she don't like crusts. I hain't hungry at all, though I'll eat these 'ere crusts so they won't be wasted."

Mrs. Curtis looked at the generous child. She knew she was hungry—the starved white face—the pitiful eyes. She went nearer to her, then shrank back with a low cry. On one side of Mary's head, half covered by the matted hair, was an unhealed gash, made by some blunt instrument; on her skinny bare arms were black and blue marks, and her tattered sleeve just hid a deep purple bruise. On her right leg, above the torn gaiter, was a cut made by a hatchet, and this was festering. Her fingers and the bare toes showing through the holes in her shoes were raw and bleeding with chilblains. Little Jane was not much better, but her bruises were not so severe.

"Who did this? asked Mrs. Curtis, in a choked voice, "and these awful bruises!

"Some of the black marks has been on a long time, but I guess Mis' Mullen's is most wore off," answered Mary, gnawing away on the crust, making it last as long as she could; "old Johnson's is them, but that cut on my hed's hern; that on my leg's where she hove the hatchet on me, and them pinches is her'n. Me an' Jane hez gunny sacks fur beds 'n its cold, I tell yer. Them's chilblains, but the rest of 'em's freeze; I can't use them two fingers 'tall, 'n they aches most on the time."

Just then a yell echoed up the hill.

"That's her callin'," said Mary; "me 'n Jane's got ter run, or we'll git h—l. Good bye, lady; yer like picturs I've seed back East in churches—wimmen

holdin' a baby, I guess that baby was him wot is growed now."

"Poor little thing!" cried the lady, tears in her sad eyes.

"Ain't it all bad she's so hurted?" said Willy, full of sympathy. "You poor little things, I'll bring you my bread every day can't I, mamma?"

"Kiss Janey," cooed the little one, and Willy ran back to kiss her. Mary looking on wistfully he turned to her. "I'll kiss you, too, Mary," he said magnanimously, "if your face is dirty!" and he gave her a loving kiss with his warm little mouth.

When Mary and Jane went up to their dreary loft that night both were crying from cold and hunger. All the food they had that day was the bread the little boy had given them. To punish them for not coming the moment they were called Mrs. Johnson said they should have no supper. She had forgotten, or may be it would not have mattered, that they had had no breakfast. The soft mild day was succeeded by a terrible night. One of those strange changes, so common in Colorado, where in an hour's time the thermometer falls from fifty above to twenty degrees below zero, took place. An icy wind came sweeping through the gulch. Below, by the roaring fire, the drunken man and woman piled the blankets about them for the wind thrust itself through the chinks in the cabin and froze their very breaths. Up in the loft where there was no fire and where the wind let in great

blasts of air, the two little children huddled together under a few gunny sacks.

Colder grew the pitiless wind, while the pines outside moaned and wailed like human souls in agony.

"Ise so cold! Ise so cold!" cried little Jane; and Mary wrapped her closer in their miserable covering, shielding her with her own body.

This is no overdrawn picture. Go down to the tenements that lean against each other, hiding the sky, in filthy alleys; search the cottages of the brutal poor who find in drink comfort and oblivion. Have these creatures no suffering little ones who huddle together in icy garrets and cry from cold and hunger?

The wind died away, but the still cold remained; the icy windows shut out the light of day. When the first rays of the morning sun found their way through the pines Mary raised herself on her arm. She felt for Janey; she was sleeping; she wrapped the clothes about her and gathered her closer to her.

"It's most mornin,'" muttered Mary, "she'll git warm then. I'm not cold enny more, nor I don't ache. It must be 'cause I see the lady that was kind to me, 'n that Willy; I'll wash my face termorrer, 'n he won't say it was dirty no more. Tain't gittin' no warmer—panes is frosted; I can't move my fingers, they're froze. 'N my feet's queer, dead like, 'n my ears. My, ain't I sleepy, 'n ef I don't

git up soon 'n build the fire she'll lick me. My head's buzzin' like it did when she hit me; wish Janey and me could live with that lady. She'd never hit me. That boy wa'n't never hit, 'n his face was as clean, 'n his hair all combed. I'll fix Janey up ter-morrer (unselfish to the last). She'd look butuful all cleaned, 'n then I'll slick me up. But I'd ruther he'd like Janey best, for she's littler nor me, an' me's more use ter be hit."

So thinking, growing drowsier and drowsier, Mary lay down again close to little Jane. Then she fell asleep, and dreamed a lady like the one she saw yesterday came for her, and took her away, gave her soft garments and healed her bruises. They went through a beautiful country where there were flowers and birds, green woods and soft turf. They went on and on until they came to a vast plain. Far away, as far as the blue line of the horizon, at which Mary had looked with wondering, childish eyes in Denver, thinking of what lay beyond, was a golden light, great palaces, towers of gold, and churches, and all the air was full of sweet melody. The plains were crowded with happy looking people.

"This is a better country to go to," said Mary in her sleep. "I wonder they didn't 'cross to here, stid of Denver".

"They did not know, Mary," answered the lady, clasping her hand tightly; "but we have found it, we will live here in happiness and love forever and forever."

Then Mary ceased to dream, but the sun, high now over the pines, flung a red gleam through the frosted pane and touched with warm light a little frozen face on which the glory of heaven lingered in a happy smile.

Oh, crushed and bruised body! Oh, stunted, dark, childish soul! Oh, weary feet that unshod, travelled over a thorny path! Not all the pomp of wealth, the greatness of learning, the grandeur of fame, can give to mortals your knowledge now, your joy, your place.

There must be—there is compensation! The grains of gold in the barren sand of that child's heart are weighed and counted by the Great Giver of all!

CHAPTER V

WITHOUT JUDGE OR JURY

Mrs. Johnson awoke from a drunken stupor near mid-day. She rose on her elbow and looked about her. There was no fire, the room was bitterly cold, but Mr. Johnson with a vacant and liquorish smile, warmed his hands at the stove, and had, with thoughtfulness fatal—had there been any fire—placed his feet in the oven. Mrs. Johnson looked at him with a vinegary smile.

"You tarnal fool, there ain't no fire," she said, getting up from the blankets and straightening her skirts, making her toilet for the day. "Where's them brats?"

"Hollered to 'em, no answer," said Mr. Johnson, with some meekness withdrawing from the stove, tumbling into the blankets just vacated.

'I'll teach 'em," shrieked the woman, a purplish flush covering her broad face. She looked around for a weapon. The only thing handy was a broken chair rung; she seized this and went to the ladder; she called Mary loudly—no answer; then she rushed up the ladder. The loft was terribly cold, into her besotted brain a suspicion dawned of what had happened. She dropped the stick and went over to the

two little figures in a horror-stricken way. She felt Mary's face, it was like ice; she lifted one of her hands, it dropped heavily to the floor. Little Jane was underneath. She picked her up; the child still breathed. Thoroughly frightened she caught Jane and climbed down the stairs.

"Mary's dead, 'Lish," she gasped in a hoarse whisper. "Oh, if this one should die! Quick, git a fire, git me hot water to rub her and blankets!"

Elisha sprang up sobered by the news, built a fire and heated water, and they brought life into the half-frozen body.

"Is there no hope for t'other?" asked Mr. Johnson as Jane opened her eyes, drank eagerly of the hot tea they offered her and then sank back in the blankets.

"Not a mite; she's froze stiff," said Mrs. Johnson. "'Tain't no great loss if 'tain't knowed. We've got ter bury her 'n them that asks we kin tell she's gone back to Denver."

"Ground's awful hard," muttered Elisha, dispiritedly.

"It needn't be deep—there's some old boxes out there—fix her up one. It wunt have to be so big—she's such a skinny thing."

In the afternoon they buried the poor little body, Jane warm and well, ran wildly about calling and crying for Mary.

The two guilty people fancied no one saw them bury the box, but Willy Curtis did. He had run

away from home with his luncheon for the "poor little things." He saw Johnson burying a box and heard Jane's frightened crying. He ran home terrified, the saloon being the nearest, he went in thinking his father would be there. His mother had told his father about the children, and in the saloon, just as Willy ran in breathless with fear and excitement, Curtis was telling the pitiful story of the children's abuse. The men listened indifferently, they disliked Curtis and were shewd enough to surmise there was little humanity in his nature. They knew, too, he had no good will toward the Johnsons. But when the child ran in white and scared and told what he had seen, every man sprang to his feet. The room was full, the miners had been idle and dull so long that it needed only this child's story to arouse their slumbering passions.

"'Twon't be no harm to go see ef t'was the child," said Brooks, and they echoed the suggestion. They crowded out of the door; some ran to tell others, some to bring things they might need. Curtis hurried to his cabin for a coil of rope. His wife, anxious and miserable, was standing by the door, Willy had slipped out of the saloon to tell her what he had seen.

"What are you going to do with the rope?" she asked suspiciously, as Curtis reached to get it from a peg.

"None of your business," he answered roughly. "Get out of my way, move now, I've no time to hear your complaints."

Just then she heard a hoarse, angry murmur.

"Mamma," cried Willy. "Here comes crowds of men, some of them with shovels and they're going down over the hill."

"Let me pass," cried Curtis fiercely; but his wife caught the coil of rope in her slender hands.

"There is some terrible crime, something wrong and cruel under way. You want to join—you have an object in it. I will expose you! You shall not go. They shall know what you want, you are trying to get the Johnson's claim."

The furious man, tried beyond endurance, snatched the rope, struck her down and rushed out after the crowd. Willy, trembling and crying, clung to his mother, as they heard the last sound of the tramping feet die away over the hill.

The lurid sunset of the bitter day had faded away behind the mountains; a dark shadow crept down the valleys, dense blackness under the pines. A deathly silence reigned. From the Johnson's cabin a thin curl of smoke floated over the tree tops and the light from the window threw a cheery gleam down the path. Johnson and his wife were sitting by the stove; both were sober; the death had frightened them so that after the burial they sat in silent misery, caring neither to drink nor speak. Jane, wondering at the strange quiet, the food that had been freely given her, crept under the pile of blankets in the corner and fell asleep.

Tramp, tramp, down the hill, resounding on the

frosty ground, a low murmur growing louder, louder —men's voices—what did it mean? The guilty couple tiptoed to the window. In the gray darkness was a crowd of men, all armed, some carried flickering torches of pine, others picks and shovels —what could it mean? They looked into each other's faces and saw reflected the same look of ghastly terror. Had these men found out the truth?

Elisha, with a grain of manhood in him, seized his revolver, but his wife snatched it away.

"Fool—" she cried, in an agony of fright, "there's fifty to one; would you have them tear us to pieces? I'll speak to 'em." She opened the door before they had asked admittance, and in a voice quavering with fear invited them in.

"There's plenty of good liker in the cellar, gentlemen!" she said.

"Bring it out!" yelled Tom Brooks, and she and her quaking husband brought up all their store. The crowd drank it in a moment, so fierce was their thirst. In the cheer they forgot for a time their errand; but Curtis did not. In a lull in the noise and laughter he shouted:

"Where's Mary MacDonald?" The crowd took up the cry—"Where's Mary MacDonald?" in hoarse, angry yells, like the snarling of wolves.

Little Jane heard, but with the instinct of an animal she crept closer under the blankets and lay motionless.

"She's gone to Denver," said Elisha Johnson, his

dry lips moving, trying to say other words that would not come.

"He lies!" shouted Brooks. "Search the ground 'round here. Tie them up first!"

Begging, praying for mercy the miserable man and woman were securely bound and thrown on the floor, while the frenzied crowd rushed out to search.

"Here's a mound!" yelled a searcher. Upon the hillside, under the very tree (the ground was soft there) where she and little Jane had often sat to warm their poor frozen hands in the sunshine, clinging close together for warmth, they found a new-made grave. Five men with shovels sprang up the hill and went to work. The earth flew, while the rest held their wavering torches above their heads to light the sad scene.

"Here's a box!" shouted one of the diggers, and soon the wretched coffin was brought to the surface. Two men with bowie-knives ripped the frail boards, hastily fastened, away from the top, and the child—neglected, starved, uncared for when the spark of life was in her—was exposed to the gaze of a multitude who would be murderers for her sake, when it could and would do no good, when it would react upon them with shame and dishonor, a blot on their history and on the history of the Territory.

One of those men who had been a doctor, lifted the little body in his arms. On it was the torn calico gown, the bruised arms and legs and that terrible gash were visible to them all. "There's an

other on her head," said the doctor; "and her ankle is half dissevered by a cut from the hatchet, that woman, that fiend—flung at her, and mortification was setting in.—It would have killed her in time. God! the agony the child must have borne. There's a deep cut on her head," he went on, as the men came nearer and held their torches over the child. "This is horrible. What butchery! What a martyr!"

"An' look here!" said another, "at that ole caliker frock—beried in 't. I warrant she never had another one, an' thin 'tis as paper."

"Look at this!" yelled a man rushing up the hill waving something in his hand. "Here's her bed. God help us ef our children should come ter that!" He held up three dirty gunny sacks, on one was the bloody print of her wounded head.

"What else do we need—what other proofs?" cried another man, fiercely. "Never such cruelty, such fiendish brutality under the sun!"

"Wot did she die of?" said a sad-faced white-haired man, coming up to the child taking the little dead hand. "I've lost little un's, but, thank God, they died in peace, with good care, 'n soft beds, kisses, 'n blessin', 'stid o' curses 'n blows!'"

The doctor laid the frail form reverently in the box. Then he stood up with bared head.

"As I hope one day to be forgiven," he said, solemnly, "either of those cuts would have killed her in time; but the cause of her death was even worse.

In reach of help, with fire and comfort and blankets below, she slowly froze to death in that open loft with those gunny sacks for a cover and you men who have been caught on these hills in winter time and wandered for hours to keep from freezing, tortured nearly to death by the cold, have not felt half the agony that little weak, suffering child felt last night while the two fiends were in their comfortable bed a knowing it!"

Then the mob rushed down the hill to the cottage. No power on earth could stop them now. They were silent—no more yells or curses—but the deep stillness of a unswerving purpose.

Near Johnson's claim, not far from the creek, was a monster pine—a monarch of the region. Up its hoary trunk were hundreds of stubs of rotted branches, a man climbed up these like a squirrel and out on a great limb. He was a fearless climber and swift in his motions.

"Make it sure, Curtis," yelled Brooks from below; neither of these men went to the grave, they needed no terrible sight to inspire them to the deed. Under the log cabin was wealth and power.

The mob hesitated at the door. Furious as they were the sight of those two people held them for a moment dumb. Elisha, with bloodshot eyes and ghastly face glared at them in a silence that was the most terrible of tortures. His lips worked—his wrinkled hands writhed, all in vain—not one sound escaped him. He made no effort to free him-

self. He stood patiently waiting, his eyes on them, on his wife, on his cabin—a thin old man, with scant gray hair falling over a pallid face. Who there could ever forget him. Not so the woman. Her wild eyes, her white face, her dishevelled hair and torn dress were not half so pitiful as that silent man. She tugged at the cords that bound her till her flesh swelled; she shrieked, and begged, and prayed; she worked herself to the door and fell on her knees, still shrieking, praying, denying. She fell on her face and all bruised and bleeding, staggered to her feet to plead again. Her shrieks made her husband wince once or twice, as he looked at her pityingly.

"Tell them," said the doctor, and the white-haired old man whose children had died in peace stepped into the room.

"Mr. Johnson," he said, with a faint pity he tried to conceal, "wot you've done is been judged by us as only to be settled by death. You and the lady has murdered a poor leetle child, and this community, horrerfied and roused by it, is goin' ter see jestice done. She was a innercent leetle creetur, as couldn't purtect herself, which made wot you done a crime as black as hell!"

Then the frenzied woman flung herself at his feet, clutched them in her bound hands, yelling in wild, incoherent words:

"We never done it! We treated the child well! It is a lie—a lie—a lie!"

"Take her off," entreated the old man in alarm; "I'm afeered of the wild creetur."

The mob rushed in and dragged the woman out. She fought them, uttering horrible screams that echoed up the valley, over the hills with an unearthly sound.

"Gentlemen, could I say a word, jest one?" asked Elisha, meekly following.

They halted and looked back—a man held something over the woman's mouth, muffling her outcry.

"Say ahead!" said the doctor, touched by the bravery of the little man standing on the threshold of his cabin for the last time.

"Would it make enny difference, gentlemen," he said, moistening his parched lips—"ef I was to tell you—that she—Mis' Johnson—my wife was—" here he struggled and moistened his lips again—"was goin' to have a child in three months, which may make her distracted like—but might make you deal less harsh with her. I don't ask nuthin' for me."

There was a silence for a moment, then the doctor said roughly: "It will not. Why should she live. and that poor girl die? In her condition she should have been kind instead of brutal. The babe of such a mother is better dead."

At that moment the woman gave a fearful yell no stifling could stop, and they hurried her down the hill. After he was unbound Elisha went up to his wife and held her hand a moment, but the poor woman was already mad, her wild eyes did not dis-

tinguish him from her murderers. He saw her dragged to the tree, lifted on the box and the rope fastened. He saw the box knocked away and her shuddering, convulsive thrills; then he took his place silently, uncomplainingly and died without a murmur, even helping them adjust the rope.

"He died game!" said the Doctor.

"Gamest I ever see," said another.

Avoiding the gloomy cabin, the mob went up the hill to the coffin, and four men—it was so light two could have carried it—took it over the hill to the settlement, where it was left in a deserted house till morning.

The saloon was empty that night, for the men, awed at their crime, slunk to their homes. Henry Curtis found his wife lying white and weak on her death bed and the morning light showed another name on the list of murders laid at his door.

His wife had been a petted daughter, willful but always loving. She married him and faithfully endured his disgrace and the bitter hardships he had brought into her life. Years taught her his villainy, his corruption; she was a useless martyr and she knew it and loathed him. She clung to her child with a love that kept her alive in spite of consumption's havoc. The last shame was the heaviest, he, her husband, struck her! She was in a strange land, away from home and friends; it was hopeless to try to reach the kind old father whom she knew would forgive her and take her son, so she

sank under this last outrage and gave up the bitter struggle.

Jane lay still a long time after the men were gone. She had kept so quiet no one knew she was there, no one remembered in the wild uproar and excitement, there was another child. Then she crept timidly out all rosy from the warm blankets, her yellow hair rumpled and her big blue eyes shining with surprise and fear. She was hardly four years old and alone in the lonely cabin in that desolate region, but Jane never knew what fear was. She toddled to the ladder calling for Mary, wistfully and patiently, then she looked around the house. She climbed up on a chair but the window was so frosty she could not see out. Little as she was she had been taught to tend the fire, so with infinite difficulty she replenished it. Then, childlike, she ventured in the pantry to search for food. She knew the bad men had taken her father and mother away and was shrewd enough to know no one would molest her. She found half a loaf of corn bread, with the cunning of an animal she crawled again under the blankets and fell asleep with a half-eaten piece in her little dirty hand.

The morning light crept down the valley and the sun looked over the trees. The Johnsons, man and woman, swung to and fro under the gnarled old pine. The rough cabin, lonely and desolate, seemed to look silent reproach from its two small windows down the path the old prospector of '56 had gone

in hope, returning in heart-broken disappointment. A cold bleak morning, the earth white with frost. Early as the dawn an evil-eyed, starved coyote slunk down the frozen creek and curiously watched the bodies dangling from the tree, then fled up the valley to the mountains with a horrid yell.

Flapping, wheeling back in fear, forward with trepidation, uttering hoarse cries, a lone vulture circled in the air near and nearer those ghastly figures; then with warning screech echoing that of the coyote, it too flew up the valley.

CHAPTER VI

REST AT LAST

Not long after the ill-omened prey-seekers had fled up the valley two men on horseback rode down the hillside over the rough trail and halted before the cabin.

'I hardly thought you'd come this morning, Curtis," said one.

"Why should a dead woman hinder me?" said the other, with a sneer. "To be a good villain—which is, I must say, a paradox—one must have neither feelings nor fear. To get rich mostly requires a good villain when the odds are against one."

The two men went into the cabin. Their object was not plunder, indeed, there was nothing to steal. Brooks went out into the kitchen where he found some boards, the surface of which he whittled smooth. Curtis filled the stove and blew the smoldering ashes. When the fire started he looked about the room. He fancied he saw the heap of blankets in the corner move, then to his surprise and disgust little Jane crawled out and looked at him with big, fearless eyes, holding tight in one dirty little hand the piece of corn bread.

"Who are you?" said Curtis, taken aback.

"'Ittle Jane, "she answered looking with a child's curiosity at the horses outside the open door.

"It's the Johnson's young one," said Brooks. "I forgot it last night."

"You always forget 'em," uttered Curtis with a scowl.

Then Jane saw the bodies on the pine's branches. "Der's muver 'n faver—" she screamed—"on the 'free. You put e'm dar, you devil!" she cried turning to Curtis, using the epithet her mother usually applied to her, which she felt meant the very acme of wickedness. The evil smile came on Curtis' mouth, as he struck the little upturned, horrified face with his iron-handled riding whip.

"I'd like to kill it," he said under his breath. Brooks made a significant gesture with his hands about his neck.

"I know it," said Curtis gloomily, "but we must get rid of the brat. Isn't there a place you can take her to? The trail there leads to Denver. They couldn't see you at the settlement, you could ride on till you got near there, hide along the creek and then dispose of it, kill it, if you like."

"I don't want no more murders," said Brooks; "me doin' the dirty work and you bossin' the job. There's a woman in Denver wot takes young ones —there's gettin' to be a likely lot of 'em, too, left 'round in baskets to be called for—" he added, with a leer. "She's a regular she tiger—knowed her East some years ago. She got hitched to a parish

feller wot believes in faith, an' them two 's got a place in Denver they calls Paradise on Earth, or some sich fandango, I guess 'tis paradise; but they don't bother with no burial permits nor doctors. They has faith the young ones will git well, an' cures 'em by prayin,' an' buries 'em handy-like in the back yard. They don't arsk no questions. Twenty dollars an' a quit-claim, that's all."

"That's our place," said Curtis. "Here's the money, I'm confounded hard up, too; but nothing venture, nothing have."

Brooks went up to the heap of blankets and dragged the sobbing child out.

"I want my Mary—my Mary!" screamed Jane.

"We'll go find her," said Brooks, catching at the idea. "See, I'll wrop ye in this shawl, an' we'll go down to Denver on the horsey. So, now."

"You'd make a good child's nurse," sneered Curtis, with his evil smile, while Jane stared at him with angry eyes where the tears still lingered.

"I don't want the brat catawaulin' all the way an' rousin' everybody!" snarled Brooks mounting his horse. Curtis handed him the child and he rode off to Denver.

After he was gone Curtis heated a poker red-hot and burned on the smooth boards:

"We claim this land including all of Johnson's claim, the hill, the creek, and this cabin.

HENRY CURTIS,
THOMAS BROOKS."

He wrote this on four boards, and going to the four corners of the land dug holes fixing the boards firmly in the sod. Then he locked the cabin door, pocketed the key and rode up over the hill, looking back as he gained the summit with the air of a proprietor. A savage scowl came over his face when his glance fell on the bodies and his evil smile lingered till he reached his cabin where his dead wife lay, and where his child in an agony of grief, crouched beside the bed, not comforted by the rough kind women who gathered in the bedroom.

The next day Brooks came back from Denver with the unwelcome news that the people of the borough were highly indignant at the lynching of the Johnsons, and steps would be taken to punish the participants in the affair to the extent of the law. A meeting was held in Rounds' saloon, where it was voted to send the body of Mary MacDonald to Denver to be publicly exhibited. The citizens of Denver should see for themselves the extent of the child's injuries and vindicate the citizens of Perry's Grant, as the settlement was called. Several miners were deputed to bury the Johnson's bodies somewhere in Desperation Gulch, before the meeting adjourned.

The following morning seven or eight men buried the Johnsons on the top of one of the pine-clad hills remote from the mining operations, and piled rocks on the mounds. These same men became aware of Curtis and Brooks' sign-boards, but after

some anger and cursing, unanimously agreed "them two was durned smart." Meanwhile Curtis, Brooks and the doctor drove down to Denver in a cart, in which was little Mary's body, and in a second rude box the body of Mrs. Curtis. There was no graveyard in Perry's Grant.

"How did Mac take the death of his child?" asked the doctor as they neared the town.

"It didn't break his heart?" said Brooks curtly. "He went to sayin' po'try 'bout he never loved a dear gazelle or some critter, then he went an' got drunk."

In town Curtis drove to Sims' undertaking shop —an adobe hut—and left the bodies, ordering as good a coffin as could be made for his wife's remains; then he sallied out to spread the news that Mary MacDonald's body was at Sims' shop, and would be exhibited to the gaze of Denver's inhabitants who might desire to see the extent of her injuries. It was early afternoon when the body was brought to Denver, but by nightfall almost every inhabitant had been to gaze at the "show." There were parties of gentlemen well fortified with ardent spirits, who came and went; mothers of families with their broods; saloon loafers; hard women who came away with tears in their bold eyes and curses on their painted lips; boys slinking in; curious little girls who looked and looked, and, fascinated by the horror, came to look again. For hours the throng came and went; it was only after dark when they ceased.

Driven from post to pillar in her short, sad existence, a target for blows and curses, tortured, suffering, bruised and beaten in her life, poor little Mary had no rest in death.

Torn from her first resting place to whet the fury of a mob, left unwatched in a ruined hut when the flush of passion was past, carted over rough roads to satisfy the vicious curiosity of another rabble, gazed at by rude men and worse women, children and drunkards! Oh the shame of it all! The disgrace, the dishonor!

There was some talk in Denver in the midst of the excitement over the body's arrival that the Johnsons should be also brought down, exhibited and hung again, but this was overruled by the wiser and soberer heads.

During the height of the excitement, when the crowd blocked the narrow lane by Sims' shop, a handsome carriage drawn by two big, black horses, driven by an old negro, went past unaware of the uproar till it was too late. In the carriage was a lady dressed in deep mourning, with a crape veil over her face; beside her was a plainly dressed woman with bold, handsome eyes, red cheeks and strong, coarse features. In a few rapid words she told the cause of the crowd, then she opened the carriage door.

"I'll walk home, Miss Virginia," she said. "I must see the child."

"How can you, Rose?" exclaimed the other. But

the carriage door slammed and Sam, the driver, made his way through the crowd.

After a long time Rose McCord came out of the shop and pushed her way through the throng.

"What shall I do," she muttered to herself. "I can't go to Mac's; he'll lay the brat's death to me. I advised it. Yet I must know who was instrumental in that lynching and where the child went. Who will tell me?"

She thought of Brooks, she had seen him from the carriage window, she would come down that night and make him tell her all.

A few minutes after eight o'clock, when it was decently dark in the streets, Mac left the saloon where he had been a prominent figure, a bereaved parent, the recipient of much consolatory liquor, and took his way to Sims'. The shop was locked and in no pleasant humor Sims, a little surly old man, opened the door and inquired "Who's there?"

"A much wronged man," said Mac with a whimper that was more a hiccough.

Sims showed him the child, placing a lamp on the rough boards where she lay.

"Same kaliker she hed when she went away," said Mac with much feeling; "and that old splintery box for a coffin. Looks natural and smiling?"

"You take it easy," growled Sims,

"Still water runs deep, boss," said Mac; "but I know she's happy and peaceful now and this country ain't no place to bring up a child. I always felt a responsibility and a care which wore on me."

"Ere sin could blight, or sorrow fade,
Death came with friendly care,
The opening bud to heaven conveyed,
And bade it blossom there.'"

"You get out," cried Sims, angrily, "you hain't enny more feelin' then a stone, quotin' po'try on that poor little thing, ef truth was knowed some on them marks an' bruises on her was old ones made by you. Git!"

Mac felt himself flung out into the night, the door locked behind him. He accepted this philosophically, making his way to the nearest saloon.

It was a strange thing the community should be so wrought up over this child's murder when it looked calmly on the double tragedy at Highlands four years before; but public sympathy for or against murder is hard to fathom. The wave of feeling sending one man to the gallows for a crime may exonerate the next for the same offense. The pity for one man murdered may turn to a conviction that death was merited by another who was no worse.

Rose McCord came back to the village at nine o'clock, going softly through the streets, slinking in the shadow of the houses and avoiding lighted windows. She stopped at a queer little frame house, standing some distance from the village high up on a sort of mound. She knocked twice in a peculiar way, after some bustle inside some one unlocked the door, and a female voice called out: "Is that you, Rose?"

"Yes, it's me," said Rose, pushing in locking the door behind her.

There was only one room in the cottage, and this was a kitchen and bedroom combined. There was a stove, a pile of dirty dishes on the table, a disorderly bed, and a trunk half filled with clothing flung in helter-skelter. Near the stove was a pretty girl with a mass of pale blonde hair, big blue eyes, a complexion of roses and cream, a saucy upturned nose, full, red lips, delicate hands and pretty, bare feet. She was dressed in an old blue flannel wrapper half concealing her plump, round figure, and was munching nuts from a pile in her lap. On the table mingling with the debris of a supper was a box of jewelry, some handsome, but most tawdry and imitation.

"I didn't see you at the saloon," said Rose, clearing a chair of a pair of dirty white kid slippers and a blue silk skirt covered with spangles.

"No, nor you won't again," answered Sal McGinnis, the blonde girl. "The best dancer west of the Missouri," she styled herself.

"Jack hasn't come back?" asked Rose in some surprise.

"Not he, bad luck to him," laughed Sal biting a nut with her firm, white teeth. "He meant to desert me here, the villain,—but, honor bright, Rose, I'm goin' to turn over a new leaf. I'm goin' to be housekeeper for a feller up to Desperation Gulch. Got one little boy, real eddicated feller.

These saloons isn't no place for a lady like me."

"What's his name?" asked Rose, irrelevantly.

"Oh, Curtis—Boston feller—handsum, too, but looks like a greaser, one of them Mexicans that allus has a knife in their boots."

"Maybe you wouldn't give a note to a man in a saloon for me?" asked Rose thoughtfully.

"'Deed I would," said Sal, flinging her nuts on the floor hunting for a gown in the heterogeneous mass in the trunk. "Didn't you take care of me when I was sick? I'd run my legs off for you."

In a marvelously short time she was off with the note. After a half hour, during which time Rose walked restlessly up and down the disorderly room, Tom Brooks came up to the cottage.

"Sal stopped to say good-by to Frenchy; she's goin' with us in the mornin'," he said as he warmed his hands by the stove.

"If I hadn't sent for you," said Rose sharply, fixing her glowing eyes on his face, "you'd never come. You'd gone back without looking me up."

"Yer hain't so 'greeable that it's a pleasure to see yer, enny way" muttered Brooks sullenly.

"You know why I ain't," she said, pitifully. "Ever since I was a girl of sixteen you've kept me this way; you got my love; if you knowed I couldn't outlive it. Wimmin of my nature never does. I could have married rich men out here but for you; others thinks I'm han'some and tells me so, but I'd ruther one kind word from you than all their fine

talk. What if you are poor, Tom? I could help you; I'd work my fingers to the bone for you."

"That is silly talk," he said rudely; "you know I like yer, that I'll marry yer when I'm rich. It tain't so fur off as you think," he finished with a knowing leer.

"I try to believe you," she said humbly. "Now sit down and tell me about the lynching, everything, and who was the leader in it."

He told her the horrible story and did not note when he told his share that her very lips grew pale as she staggered to a chair.

"And the child, what of her? Where is she?" she said when he finished.

"Don't know," muttered Brooks uneasily, turning his eyes away from meeting her searching gaze.

"You are lying," she cried fiercely, "the child is alive; you've hid it somewhere."

"Curtis knows where it is," he said shortly.

"Fool!" cried Rose, "couldn't you have stolen the child and hid it and had him in your power? Whatever he did you'd had that to keep him in check. You've always told me that you had no love for him, that you hated his insolent ways, yet you play into his hand every time."

Brooks sprang to his feet with a curse at his folly and walked to the window. Rose followed him.

"Tell me where the child is!" she pleaded, clinging to his arm. "I'll never tell. I must know. I will know. You see how much wiser I am than

you. Curtis could never make a fool of me. Tom, tell me."

She was crying bitterly now. He pushed her away and seized his hat.

"I don't know, I tell yer," he said savagely.

She blocked the doorway a moment. "I know your lies," she said calmly. "You do know where the child is, and it is alive. I warn you, if it dies you shall be exposed. I will tell the truth, and Johnson's heirs shall have the land you and Curtis have stolen. Treat me as a friend, Tom, and I am a friend; treat me as an enemy, and I am a bitter one."

"You're a mad fool!" said the man roughly, pushing by her and hurrying away.

"I might have told him," she muttered, following a few moments after, "but I can't. He would turn from me with loathing, he would hate and shun me. How low, how false I am for him, and how little he cares; but I can't, I won't give up the hope he will change, and love me as he used to."

After Mrs. Curtis' funeral the next day MacDonald drove back to his residence above the grocery store and halted at the stairs. They were rickety and steep, this was ample reason why he should not mount them, so he called "Julia" in stentorian tones. After some delay a window was pushed up and the unclassic features of Mrs. Mullen appeared framed in the sash.

"What d'ye want?" she cried shrilly.

"Circumstances makes it a dooty you owes to society, Juliet, to attire your beauteous self in decent mourning garments, get on this mourning coach with me and ride out to the cemetery, where I'm going to perferm a father's dooty."

"Dooty be durned" said Julia, as she slammed down the window.

"Curt and uncourteous," muttered Mac, chirruping to his sorry steed. "I'll go alone.

And no man saw that funeral,
And no man knew it e'er."

He drove up to Sims' shop and went in. Sims was away, but Mary's body still lay on the boards. Mac lifted it, laid it in the coffin, smoothing the thin, fair hair and arranging the old calico frock. Then he nailed down the boards and carried the box out to the wagon. No one offered to help him, though a few of the men who had been vociferous in their condemnation of the Johnsons the day before were loitering along the street.

"I don't know," said Mac, gathering up the reins again, "whether Mary has had services or not; I guess it don't make much difference, it's getting late, and that graveyard's all of four miles."

He drove off moralizing as he went, and poor little Mary with neither preacher nor prayers, mourners or tears, was hurried to the graveyard where, thank God, the dreary body found rest at last.

Mac dug her a grave beside the neat iron fence inclosing the grave of the young man killed by

Dwight Wallace, and he placed the rude box so that it lay at the feet of the buried man. He smoothed the earth over the mound, then leaning one foot upon it lighted his pipe.

"They'll be company for one another and both murdered," he said with some solemnity. Then he looked out on the picture before him.

For a mile or two an undulating plain lay before the graveyard—brown and gray, covered with dead buffalo grass and cactus; further on were a few scattered houses, then a cluster of houses, and a church; while below this the river ran rippling and frothing over the breaking ice. A line of trees fringed either bank, up the stream was the broad sandy bed of Cherry Creek where a thin stream of water oozed through the sand, appearing and vanishing till it joined the river. Beyond the Platte were hills and a few houses; far beyond them lay rolling plains away to the low foothills; then bleak and bare, with snowy crests and scattered snow lying in white ridges on the scarred and seamed surfaces veiled now in bluish vapor, were the Rocky Mountains—the eternal walls of God. Pike's Peak, Gray's and Long's, with hoary heads, cloud-kissed, caught the last glow of the setting sun, that, red and awful, flamed the clouds behind them with the glow of a world on fire.

Awed by the splendor of those silent walls, the wretched sot—a man degraded and degrading—MacDonald made his way homeward never dream

ing that his little martyred child lay with scarred, folded hands over her suffering breast in that rough coffin at the feet of her brother—for they had one father—lay at his feet as humbly and shrinkingly as she would have crept had she met the brave, young soldier in her pathetic, loveless life.

CHAPTER VII.

PARADISE ON EARTH

Mrs. Matthew Cowan was a respectable Irish lady of religious inclination. She dwelt in an Ohio town not far from Rocky Creek where the Wallace family lived for so many years. There had been a Mr. Cowan of convivial habits but reckless expenditure; he died, however, of a fall from a window in an intoxicated moment, and rumor was quick to hint perhaps Mrs. Cowan added to the momentum of his fall by a gentle, wifely push. Fortunately for the worthy widow he fell before a legacy came to her. The death of a rich aunt in England left her with some $20,000, besides clearing the farm of the numerous mortgages with which her husband had burdened it; indeed for the past few years almost the only harvest raised on the Cowan farm had been loans. Freed from husbandly annoyance, Mrs. Cowan took on an air of cheerful melancholy and intense piety. She was foremost in all religious meetings, and was regularly converted at each revival, occupying a front seat with those who wished to be prayed for. She was a short, thin woman, with little black eyes, weazened neck, scanty black hair, and a much-wrinkled face. She wore black

alpacas of seedy aspect, but in the fourth year of her widowhood descended to the vanity of a bright green bow at her collar.

About this time a cadaverous looking man, with large pale eyes, auburn side-whiskers and hair, came to the town—Reedville—and established a home or a "Paradise on Earth," he called it, and this name painted on a board was nailed to the picket fence enclosing the land and weather-worn house he had hired. A tired-looking woman—his wife—attended to the material wants of the household, while he attended to the spiritual. There being no poor-house in the vicinity, the town officers boarded their paupers in this "Paradise."

The Rev. Mr. Green became highly popular in the community, though all the ladies, at least, acknowledged his wife was queer. Finally, poor, tired Mrs. Green died, then stories came out of abuse and neglect. Mr. Green endeavored to save expenses by carrying on the "Paradise" with pauper labor. He never troubled the parish for burial permits, but he did for coffins; some charitable visitors, coming one day, found vermin-covered creatures tied in the garret, without food or clothing, little children famished for food, and starved dead babies in rude boxes ready for burial—while some half-witted women told a horrible story of crime and abuse.

The result was that Mr. Green was driven out of Paradise, the name by the way and the sign-board

still on the rickety fence clung to the place for years as an ironical reproach.

Mrs. Cowan boldly took the Rev. Jonas' part, to further prove her belief in his goodness, married him one day, and a few weeks later the worthy pair left for Denver in an elegant train then setting out. In Denver they established a second "Paradise," in which by the payment of $20 children were taken and cared for and no questions asked. Articles of adoption had to be given with each child, and all claims on it relinquished.

Mr. and Mrs. Green's great idea and principle was to cure by faith; also, it may be added to nourish and clothe by faith, for the sufferers in this paradise seldom had anything else.

"We trusts and prays," the Rev. Green would explain, with an inward sucking of his lower lip, as if it were a most toothsome morsel. "If a child is ill, we pray; we have faith it will recover, if it is so ordained. If a child is hungry we teach it to have faith it will be fed, and our dear brothers and sisters in this far Western settlement has been responsive to our calls upon them; so we has been satisfied our faith has not been throwed away, nor cast as pearls afore swine. We will be cared for as 'Ligah was by ravens."

The home had been established four years, when a horseman rode up one night, knocked at the rude door of the long rambling adobe house, the "Paradise," and presented at the same time a $20 bill

and a four-year-old girl. Of course the child was accepted. She said her name was Jane, and she wanted Mary. She was called Jane, soundly beaten for wanting anything and lacking faith. The poor children early learned in the Home it did not need much faith as far as beatings were concerned; they were an understood thing.

Jane lived through the abuse and privations of the Home. She was tough as a pine knot, wiry and hardy, and careless of blows or scoldings. She was a silent child, never crying, no matter what was done to her. She would look at her tormentors with her big solemn eyes, and shut her red lips firmly. So she lived, and others died. She saw little babies die, gasping and wailing for food; she saw miserable wrecks their friends had placed there for care and shelter, go mad in baffled rage, shrieking with want and disease; she saw little children like herself beaten to insensibility, starved till they cried for bread. Jane felt for all as she grew older, but the hardships of her babyhood made her able to bear. There was one reason though, why she could endure better—she stole! In the dead of night she crept from her bed, took the key of the pantry from the nail in the Rev. Jonas' own bedroom, and gathered enough to last her for days. She hid it away feasting in secret like a young cannibal. She was preternaturally sharp.

"Ef I tell the rest of 'em or give 'em enny, they'll blow on me," she said to herself, and kept her secret.

The home was some distance from the town, and few ever came out to it, so the Rev. Jonas was not troubled with inquirers. He and his wife got along well, and were mutually satisfied with each other; both felt a subdued ecstasy in maltreating the helpless beings by whom they were surrounded.

"I never see the beat how things goes outer that pantry," snarled Mrs. Green one afternoon, flouncing into the kitchen from the pantry, with a rolling board covered with raw doughnuts in her hand. A poor old man was frying doughnuts at the fire. (God help him! he sold his farm in the East, gave his son and his son's wife the money, and went to the new country with them, this was the return). "How many doughnuts is there in that kittle?" (The doughnuts were for the Green's table.)

"There's six," quavered the old man—"all you give me to fry!"

"I give you seven," cried the hag, furiously; "seven! There's six. You ate one! "I'll call the Riverend—stealin' in this house, you miserable old thief!"

"'Fore heaven, marm," quaked the old man, holding his trembling hands before his face, "I never done it. I never eat one. Hungry as I be, I never stole yit."

"You lie," she shrieked—"Jonas, Jonas!"

A child, who had been standing on a box washing dishes in slimy, greasy water with on old stocking foot, wiped the water off her arms, and jumped down from the box.

"He never eated it, Mis' Green," the child said boldly; "I done it."

This was not true; the old man, driven by hunger had devoured the doughnut, the child, looking back saw him smacking his lips over the last bite. She liked him and she pitied him. It seemed perfectly natural to her that he should steal; she was not above that sort of thing herself. She took the blame on her shoulders; the Greens could not hurt her as much as they could the poor old man—the trembling old creature whose tears ran down his cheeks after her avowal.

"You did? You, Jane? You imp of Satan!" yelled Mrs. Green, running to the pantry door and bringing out a rawhide, the cruelest of all weapons. Jane knew the whip, and had felt it too often to like it. Frequently, in her predatory excursions to the pantry, she had desired to make away with it, but was always at a loss for an expedient. She retreated to the box, and ran one dirty arm into the dish water.

"Come here, or I'll skin yer alive!" said Mrs. Green, flourishing the whip.

'I won't," said Jane, stoutly. "Yer can't kill me; yer ain't goin' ter let me lay on that old table in the shed. I ain't no flabby baby, or scared young'un; yer can't bury me in the yard, them says," with a wave of her disengaged hand in the direction of the room where the poor inmates were locked up—"that I's a imp of saten 'n can't be hurt. I hain't 'feered of ye. I'm not hungry; they is; I'm weller 'n them, too."

"Oh, you are!" sneered Mrs. Green,—"you are! We'll see!" She advanced toward the child with the whip, but Jane reached out from the dishwater a long, sharp carving knife, and flourished it.

"Come nigher, an' I'll jab ye!" she said decisively, Mrs. Green, much alarmed, fled for Jonas, and the old man fell back against the wall overcome with his delight. Just at that exciting moment the Rev. Jonas came bustling along the narrow entry that ran the whole length of the house.

"What's all this noise?" he asked testily. Mrs. Green explained, but to her surprise he pinched her arm with viciousness and force.

"Never mind; never mind, I say," he muttered in a low voice. "Company, fool, company!"

At this magical word Mrs. Green's violence abated; a grim smile adorned her features, as she began to smooth down her rolled-up sleeves.

"Lady in the parlor," said Jonas, unctuously; "come in kerrige, waitin' to the door."

"What's she want?" whispered Mrs. Green; "not to see the home? Them critturs ain't fixed up—dirty as rot, and old Jim tied up in the corner. Lord knows how them babies is; I hain't seen 'em sence mornin'; an' them two ijuts takin' ker o' 'em will be horrid sights now."

"She don't wanter see the home," said Jonas, reassuringly; "she wants to see a young one brought here by a sand-haired man four years ago. It's that Jane."

Jane at a safe distance was watching them with big, curious eyes.

"Can't yer palm one of t'other on her, an' fool her? We may make suthin' on't," said the Mistress of Paradise on Earth, with cupidity on every feature.

"I thought on't," answered Jonas; "but its no use. She knows the age of the brat to a minit—used to know the parents."

"G' long an' git yer apirn on," said Mrs. Green to the culprit she would willingly have strangled.

"Then come to the parlor," commanded Jonas with an unholy glare, shaking his bony fist at her in token of what she might get if she were not discreet.

Jane put on a clean gingham pinafore used only on company days, and followed the worthy couple. The parlor was distinguished from the rest of the rooms (except Jonas' private apartment) by having a board floor—the rest had only earth. There were four or five chairs of unpainted wood in the parlor, a table and a large Bible on a box which was covered with a green shawl, the property of a female inmate who died in fits, owing, the rest thought, to having cold water thrown on her when she was refractory and being kept tied up, wet and shivering, for hours. In the parlor was a fireplace, and hanging over this a life-like portrait of the Reverend Jonas. "Done in oil," his wife always explained, "'n him to the very life." The Rev. Jonas was rep-

resented with a benevolent smile, his hair brushed straight up from his forehead, standing in a kind of halo, while in his hand he held a large volume, presumably a holy book from the absorbed expression of his turned up eyes.

In the room, standing by the window, looking idly out on the barren yard that stretched to an adobe wall some five feet high, beyond which was the road where Sam was driving the fine, black horses up and down, was a large, tall woman with handsome dark eyes and red cheeks. She was dressed in a rich silk with fine velvet cape and bonnet, her hands covered with kid gloves ending in gold bracelets. She appeared something wonderful and beautiful to the child. Rose McCord recognized Jane at a glance. A look of triumph passed over her face; then she bit her lip angrily. Why had she not thought of this place before in all the years she had been trying to find the child?

"Miss Wallace sent down a basket of wine and some jellies for your sick," she said curtly to the obsequious Jonas and his wife; "also this $10 bill. Please get the things from the carriage."

There was no alternative but for them to leave her alone with the child. She looked at Jane with a strange glance of loathing and hate. Jane looked back at her in undisguised delight, fixing her eyes on the bracelets. She wondered what they were. She would have liked to put one on her arm, just to see how it would look.

"What's your name?" said Rose, haughtily.

"Jane."

"Jane what?"

"Dunno," answered Jane indifferently, her mind taken up with the bracelets.

"Do they beat you here?"

"Lots," said Jane frankly; "sometimes with the broom, mostwise with a whip, sometimes what comes handiest. I git over it though, can't hurt me much, I'm a imp of Satan."

"Can you read?" asked Rose, her eyes glowing with a strange malicious light.

"Wot's read?" said Jane.

Still that ugly light in Rose McCord's eyes. Was she pleased with the ignorance of the poor little orphan, glad that this sad, degraded childhood was like, though far worse, than her own.

"Do you work hard?" said Rose quickly, for the Greens were hurrying in with the boxes of wine and jelly.

"Washes dishes; water's mostly cold; has to go way to the creek for it; scrubs this 'ere floor too," said Jane with some pride; "but its allfired splintery; gets into my hands. Cooks some, 'n washes —though critter's clothes ain't washed of'n, 'cept their company ones."

Before Rose could be further informed, Jonas and his wife entered in a breathless state.

"I am going now," said Rose, loftily. "This is the child I knew of. You will treat her well no

matter what she does; never dare to strike her. You have heard of the Johnsons who were hung near here four years ago—a little excitement and an exposure of your Home would give you as bad a fate. I have a fair idea how this place is managed, but it is none of my affair. See that this child is free from your abuse."

"You talk purty big fur Miss Wallace's hired girl, in yer silks and satins, which I've no doubt is the Missus' old 'uns," snapped Mrs. Green with some spite.

"Let the idler go, Lillian!" said the Rev. Jonas meekly. "The painted Jezebel became food for dogs!"

"You see fit to insult me," said Rose coolly, though her eyes were flaming. "The negro lied to you. I am Miss Wallace's companion and confidant. Bah, I lower myself talking to you. Remember this, however; I shall come here to look after that child and I will know how she is, whether you have disobeyed me or not. I warn you, I mean what I say when I tell you I will have you served as the Johnsons were."

With that Rose swept out of the house glowering fiercely at Sam as she got in the carriage; for between the two was a deadly feud of many years standing.

As they drove through the town, they noticed knots of men gathered together at corners and in the street, women lingering, listening, too.

"What's de row now?" asked Sam of a crony as he drove on. Rose leaned forward listening eagerly.

"Big find," said the man addressed coming up to the carriage. "Curtis and Brooks has struck it rich in Desperation Gulch. They've found a pocket of silver nigh where Johnson's old cabin stood. They've took out $50,000 in a half day. There's millions more where it come from!"

"Golly! they're lucky," said Sam, whipping up his horses.

Rose McCord heard, and fell back against the cushion with a bitter moan.

"God!" she muttered; "It might be mine! It is mine—if I dared—if I could—but I am tied hand and foot—hand and foot; and he will get it all! What shall I do? Must I let it go on? He take the wealth there that is mine? Oh, if he knew, as he would then, he would hate me, loathe me, turn from me with scorn. He would not take my money, he would not love me ever in the future; anything but his loathing!"

All her pride, her self-command was gone. She clenched her hands in an agony of grief, weeping wildly—tears that gave her no relief but maddened her the more, while the haunting question echoed and re-echoed through her whirling brain, to meet no answer, no comfort, no hope!

"What shall I do? What shall I do?"

CHAPTER VIII

A HIDDEN POCKET

Early in the morning of the 28th of August, 1872, two men were seen descending a barren hill covered by the blackened stumps of pine trees. Below them was a valley where a sandy creek-bed lay blistering in the sun. A few yards from it on the hillside was the door of a tunnel going into the hill. It was easy to recognize Desperation Gulch and Johnson's cabin. There was no sound, this still, hot morning but the cracking of the twigs and the steps breaking them. The men came steadily on, one carrying a pick, the other a shovel. They stopped at the end of the mine and looked down the valley.

"It will be hot to-day," said one, more to break the silence than because he cared whether it was or not.

"Twon't matter to us in the tomb there," said the other, sullenly.

"You're gloomy, Brooks; men can't be rich in a day," said the first speaker; but he looked at Brooks pityingly; his gaunt face, his long, unkempt hair and beard, his haggard eyes and ragged clothes told too well the story of want and failure.

"Yer ain't none too cheerful yerself, Curtis," muttered Brooks, working away at the lock on the door. "You've, grown gray an' thin—aged ten year in four, ef that's enny comfort to yer."

"I don't care," Curtis answered, carelessly; "I'm a young man yet; fortune would give me youth enough. One thing's lucky though; but for our miserable hut Perry's Grant would be a stack of ruined houses, with empty rooms and staring windows like the eye-sockets of skulls. The whole region around is deserted, no one will dispute our wealth with us.

Brooks laughed harshly, swinging open the door.

"Dispute our claim to earth and rocks and a hole that's cost us four years' labor. What would they want it for but a grave?"

"There's something there beside earth," said Curtis, an almost prophetic light on his face. "There's porphyry, there's limestone; and where they are there's silver. We must find it—we will find it. Let's go to work; we waste daylight."

He seized a lamp and went into the dark hole.

"Nothin' but work and disappointment," muttered Brooks gloomily, following him, "but I'll stick to it long's he will. It would be my luck to go and him strike it, and me lose four years' work."

An hour after they had gone into the mine two other people came down the mountain. A frail boy of twelve, carrying a tin pail, and a pretty blonde woman with a shovel over her shoulder.

She wore a costume hardly suitable to her sex, and seemed to have appropriated Curtis' clothing. However, the rough blue flannel shirt was becoming, and, though thin and pale, it was easy to recognize in her Sal McGinnis, "the best jig dancer west of the Missouri."

Her pretty hands grasped the shovel in a determined way; she had the same anxious look as the two men who were now digging in the earth like rats.

"I wish we could stay here 'n rest, Sal," said the boy wistfully; "it's so hot 'n I'm so tired."

"But we can't, dear," said Sal kindly; "it's work or bust. Set the pail in the shade; they'll wring our necks if the water gits warm, an' none nigher than a mile. Come on."

She seized the child's unwilling hand and ran into the mine, where she soon went to work like the rest. She and Willy loaded the little cart with earth. Brooks hauled it out, while Curtis worked at walls of the cave, with quick nervous strokes of his pick. They worked in silence for hours. All of a sudden Curtis called out sharply:

"Look out!"

They sprang back to the door. With a thundering crash a great mass of earth and rock fell from the side of the cave to the floor.

"Light the torches, Brooks," cried Curtis in a hoarse, unnatural voice. Then he seized a torch, rushing over the heap of earth like a maniac.

"He ain't crazy, is he?" said Sal, dropping her shovel.

"What is it, papa??" cried Willy. "What is in that black hole?"

"Black hole!" yelled Cutris, transfigured with joy, his features working, his eyes full of tears, "black hole? It's there! there! there! Ha, ha, ha, we beat them—we hung on—we're rich! rich! Oh, I shall go mad—speak some of you, that I'll know I'm not dreaming!"

"Ye're awake, Henry," said Sal soothingly; "but I don't see nuthin' there only a heap of black, sandy stuff."

Brooks followed her up the pile of earth while Willy's pale little face peered under her arm as she held the torch above her head.

"That sand, that black sand's it, it, it!" yelled Curtis, diving up handfuls of the sand, kissing and clenching it, and gathering more when it fell, "we've found a pocket—that's silver, fools—see it shine; iron's turned it, but it's all silver. There's thousands of tons of it, and there's thousands of dollars to the ton!"

They knelt down and gathered the dark stuff, black as soot, in their hands; here and there a few bright grains shone through the black—the silver that had not been turned by the baser mineral.

"Black hole!" went on Curtis, still crazy with the stroke of fortune: "I felt it was here. Don't ask me how. I can't tell you. When I planned

for gold in the creek, grains of silver would come at the bottom of the pan, always more silver in mine than in 'tother. I felt it was a sign. I wasn't to look for gold. I was to seek this silver. It might have washed down the hills, it might have worked its way through the earth; who knows? Who's ever told where the gold and silver in the creeks come from? Who? Where are your men of science? Can they answer? They'd be billionaires if they could. Where are your mining engineers? What do they know? What can they tell you about it? I used to look at that cabin till my eyeballs burned. It mocked me, it jibed at me; for it knew that I hungered for what it held secret. There are stories of men who have lived over hidden treasure all their days; look at Johnson—his was no story; he was alive—a man like ourselves. He lived over this for years; he walked over it, slept over it, ate over it, creeping down to that cursed creek till he got too weak to crawl, and we're reaping the benefit."

He stopped then and sunk down exhausted. Sal brought him water, which he drank in long gulps, like a man parhced with thirst.

"I'm on fire," he gasped. "I'll go out to the air. Help me, Sal, I will not lose it all. I won't lose it. I'll not give way; I'm only faint."

He was better in the air, and the whole party set out for their lonely cabin. They walked with buoyant, hopeful steps and light hearts. In their rags, their hunger, they were millionaires.

Through the deserted gulch a hot wind came from the plains, rustling the branches of the pines on the hills, and as ever they seemed to be whispering mysteries. Perhaps they wondered why old Johnson of '56 should have failed to find the wealth that came to evil men, while he who fought all the terrors of solitude and want should die poor, wretched, blind. A strange feature of the miner's life, the luck of some, the misfortune of others.

How calm that valley was, how quiet; yet, the agony and heart break it had seen, the misery, the murders, the treachery, and the crime! Like a battle-field, where the green grass, the shady trees, and the sweet birds were just the same after the fight as before, the sky as blue the sun as warm, the moon as bright, and the gentle breeze murmurs low, as if there had been no carnage and slaughter a few short days gone by; no turf wet with life-blood of the bravest in the land. There are cyclones that tear nature's heart, and there are cyclones that rend the lives of human beings.

Twenty miles from Desperation Gulch was Coyote Gulch—a deep, long ravine—where all the old miners had flocked from Perry's Grant, besides many new ones from all over the country. At the head of Coyote Gulch a black little smelter vomited greenish smoke from a tall chimney all day; here the sandy soot of Johnson's, or rather Curtis' and Brooks' claim, was turned into great shining bars of silver, which showed Curtis that he had not half

estimated his wealth; for the "sand" assayed $1,000 to the ton.

On the evening of the 28th of August, Curtis mounted his bony horse and rode over to Coyote Gulch in hot haste to spread his news, and came back laden with parcels. Food had been a scarcity in Perry's Grant for months, but he was a millionaire now. He brought Sal—for he was always gallant to the fair sex, excepting his dead wife—a green silk gown, a store-keeper at the Gulch had detained from an erring fair one for groceries unpaid. Sal put it on with a shriek of laughter. She had swept the room, set the table, and was only waiting for the parcels to cook supper.

"There's an antelope steak, Sal, tea, coffee, flour, whiskey, a jack-rabbit, and a jar of jam—all I could bring. Cook them all; I mean to eat as I never ate before," said Curtis, flinging down the bundles.

Sal was an expert cook, she prepared a fine meal; they all sat down to it, enjoying beside mugs of dark-colored liquid highly exhilarating. Willy was made to take his share and drink to the "pocket," but he shortly fell asleep. Brooks, in a state of delight intense as his past moods had been gloomy, filled his glass so often the table rose up to meet him; he considered it discreet to fall under, as it was determined to rise, and put no obstacles in its way.

Sal put down her whiskey untasted. She was restless and uneasy, she had talked and laughed

with a feverish gayety; now even that had vanished. She rose and flung open the door. It was starlight, a melancholy wind soughing through the pines around the little clearing.

"I feel as if I'd stifle," she said abruptly.

"You're not sick," said Curtis impetuously. "You mustn't be now. Just think how I've striven and toiled in this cursed place. Oh, I spent money once right royally, but never hereafter. I've learned what money is, what money means, what life is without it; I shall turn over a new page in my life. I will be rich and respected now. I will sell the mine to the first good bidder, then good-by to a miner's life and the life of a vagabond."

"I'm heart-sick," sobbed Sal.

"Why?"

"Because," she went on tremulously, "I've got ter go back, ter go down; what's there left for me!"

"Who said you'd got to go back?" said Curtis earnestly. "You'll go with me, Sal, as my wife—my boy's mother. You have stuck to me all these years, these hard years; sold your clothes, your jewelry; parted with all you had to keep us from starving. You have saved your portion of food for me; starved yourself for me. I don't forget it, nor how patiently you worked, digging in the tunnel, always with faith in me, and cheering me when I was saddest. I've been a bad man. I never cared for any one; but now I do feel love for you. Part from you, Sal, now that fortune has come? Never! Let

the world say what it will, we will live it down!"

"Won't yer be 'shamed of me?" she muttered.

"Never, Sal. You are beautiful. The world forgives ignorance in beauty; you shall learn all that books can teach to be a lady."

"I'll try ter be wot yer'd like, Henry," she said piteously kneeling at his side, looking into his face, with her beautiful eyes; "but don't yer back out when I've taught myself to believe it's all goin' ter happen."

He smiled on her—not the ugly smile but a marvelously winning one.

"I'll keep my faith with you, Sal," he said gently, "as I hope to live to enjoy that silver in the hillside. I swear by my fortune and that is my faith —my life!"

A week later a syndicate of wealthy Englishmen came up to Desperation Gulch. They were in Denver and heard of the strike. They examined the mine, and offered the owners $2,000,000 for the property, hardly supposing their offer would be taken, for the winner of such a prize generally keeps hoping always for more, till sometimes the riches melt away and he goes back to prospecting again, poor, as ever.

"I never want to see this place again," said Curtis, as he got into the stage that ran between Coyote Gulch and Denver.

"There's a bad mem'ry with it," said Brooks, looking back uncomfortably, as if he could see be-

hind him two motionless figures hanging from an old pine tree. "I sometimes misdoubt ef any good'll come of the money arter all."

"There's where you're wrong," observed Curtis calmly. "Did you ever hear of ill-gotten gains making any trouble in real life? The man who robs the widow and orphan is a church-goer and dies respected. You must learn sense if you want to enjoy life. Romance is pretty and instructive in books but never in real life. How many rich men have you ever heard of who made their money by fair and honest means? How many of the rich mine owners in this State to-day could bear an investigation as to the justness of their ownership? Rarely the first man who stakes a claim gets the fruit of his labor. Often times he is in a poor-house, or a sot in a bar-room, or a dead man with a bullet in his heart, while the man who ruined him or killed him takes the mine. I've no sympathy with preaching or humbug."

"May be you're right," said Brooks hopefully.

At Denver the old partners said farewell.

"There is a stage to-night; we're going east," said Curtis. "Good-by. Good luck to you!"

With these few words the men parted. Sal and Willy waved Brooks good-by as the stage rattled out on the plains, that was all. It seemed like a dream.

Brooks went up to "Paradise on Earth" that evening. There was something he must see to, that

Curtis with all his acuteness had forgotten. The Rev. Jonas Green answered his knock. Brooks had pulled his coat about his ears, his hat down over his eyes and stood aside so that the flickering lamp Jonas held would not shine on his face.

"What yer want this time o'night?" asked Jonas.

"Is there a child here, blue-eyed, named Jane, eight years old?" said Brooks.

"Three days ago 'dopted by a man an' his wife; don't know their names, nor where they went, nor where they come from. Ennythin' more?"

"No," said Brooks; "your civilness will never be your death," and with that he strode away.

He kept hidden that night, but early in the morning purchased a horse and set out for the East. He waved his hat mockingly at the old Wallace house as he saw it for the last time, when he rode up a hill, to the stage road.

"I've outwitted yer, Miss Rose," he chuckled. "Spite and fury can't hurt me now. Better fortune to yer next time!"

CHAPTER IX

JANE FINDS FRIENDS

On the afternoon of that eventful day in Desperation Gulch, an old couple came riding into Denver on two sorry looking mules bearing the marks of a long journey. One of these mules which had a white coat, now gray with dust, was ridden by a tall, thin woman with tanned, wrinkled face, bright blue eyes, and a mass of disordered gray hair under a man's hat. She was dressed in a green delaine dress, spotted with round yellow suns, and had strapped on her back a soldier's knapsack. On the other mule was a short, stoutish man, with little, gray eyes; bronzed face, untidy gray beard and long hair. He wore buckskin clothes and was loaded down with bundles strapped to him, while a large buckskin pouch hung on the side of the mule.

"Now, Alexander McClure, I hope it's yerself as is satisfied," said the woman, with an attempt at anger which her laughing eyes and the wrinkles about her mouth belied. "Shure, now, it's a narrow escape we had dodgin' them rid divils and comin' nigh perishin' o' hunger and thirst in the gulch. Indade, O'ill shtay here now; wild horses

nor mules'll not drag me away from this town, an' a foine place it is. You kin go gallavantin' if you're a moind, but never a Biddy'll go wid you; so put that in your pipe and shmoke it."

"Weel, Biddy," said the old man, with a comical air of resignation. "I only went to Californy to oblege a leddy who wanted to try mining; I've traveled here to oblege the same leddy who knew I'd a claim in Coyote Gulch and wanted to try her luck there, I'd follow this leddy wherever she goes."

"Alexander McClure, didn't the Irish people settle that rock heap of Scotland, an' give the foinest bluid to the counthry? Phat 'ud the English be widout the Irish, an' America indade! Faith 't is to your credit that you do as I tould you, why should we shtay to one place? The wurld's a big place, we've to see all we kin, an' now 't isn't many as is gone to New Zealan' an' Australia, an' San Francisco, an' back agin to the San'wich Islands an' hinto Chiny, where there's the divil's own lives, a quar set—thin to England, taking a run to Ireland an' to Dublin, a foiner city hi niver did see in our travels—thin back agin to Australia, striking it rich, an bein' robbed ont' an' takin' ship for Frisco an' thin here to Denver, right in the shadder of thim mountains a smoiling on us full of goold, indade, to be had for the askin'."

"You owre gi'en to talking, Biddy, it's the Irish in ye," said Alexander thoughtfully, "but you are never gi'en to ranting and ye have the brain of a

man, and (with a sly twinkle) a Scotsman, too. The crowd there at the tavern maun see sumat to steer at; weel, let 'em glower if it will do'em good."

"It's the fureign look we has," smiled Biddy complacently; "mebbe now there's some there as knows you. You was here in '56."

"Not mony of them's left in this world noo," said McClure sorrowfully. "Mony of them sleeps in the plains and on the hill there. They was na' built for storms like me, they let the warld fret them and worrit where I took it easy an' went on my journey wi' song and laughter. Laughter keeps us alive, Biddy. It's the best boon of the good Lard's, not gi'en to the beests neither but jest to man."

"Do you put people up in this tavirn, now?" called Biddy, as the mules slowly ambled along the dusty road to the low rambling wooden building with its two stories and piazza, where, above, the ladies sat in the shade and looked down and below, the men made themselves comfortable with their feet on the railing.

"Ef they pays," said a fat, red-faced man, Bowen, ex-saloon keeper, advancing to the new-comers.

"Shure, you're an imperdent one," said Biddy, throwing herself off her mule with an agile spring. "Did ye think we was lowerin' ourselves by visitin' ye? Thank the good Lord you've got the German face, and ould Ireland hasn't got to blush for ye. See that," she went on, shaking a fat purse at him, "see that wallet. There's good California

goold in't, better money thin you'll iver see agin till you sell your ould carcase to the surgeon. Now, feed thim animals well, son," she said to a small boy, who came around the building with the air of a judge of horse flesh, and took the mules' bridles. "Phat a little thing it is, ladin' thim grate brutes. It's lucky they're koind now, or he'd get his death, an' his father a lookin' on, too."

After a bountiful meal Alexander went out to purchase supplies and a wagon for his trip to Coyote Gulch; Mrs. McClure, unearthing a sunbonnet from her knapsack, (it was a wonder it held so much, and a mystery where all the things came from) sallied out in pursuit of an object she had set her heart on. She went down to the lower porch, but found it deserted by all save one man. She went up to him. He was half asleep, and had an intoxicated look.

"Kin you tell me, man, where I'll find a child, now—an orphan to adopt?"

"Find a child?" said MacDonald. "What you want—one for?"

"Company," said Mrs. McClure, disposed to be conciliatory, for the gentleman seemed to be in a contradictory humor.

"Company. Irish, ain't you?" muttered Mac absently.

"Indade I am, an' proud uv it?"

"Well, well, good soul, don't be ashamed of your country.

'Lives there a man with soul so dead
Who never to himself has said,
This is my own, my native land?

"Good people the Irish, but impetuous, passionate, high-spirited."

"Well, where'll I find a child?" said Mrs. McClure, irritably.

"Indeed, Madame, I don't know, unless at that long, low building, on the hill, the mud house. If it's a dead child—which, by the way you did not tell me, though you are too respectable certainly, despite your miscellaneous appearance, to be a female ghoul—"

"Female ghoul, indade!" panted Mrs. McClure. "Ghoul indade! Now phat under the hivens is that?"

"You would, if you were a ghoul," said Mac, mildly, "be more apt to find what you want at that house, which is poetically named 'Paradise on Earth,' and which is run by faith, Reverend Jonas Green and Mrs. Vixen Green. You may find a live child there, 'Paradise on Earth,' sweetly poetic—"

'Must I leave thee, Paradise? Thus leave
Thee, native soil, these happy walks and shades?'"

"Well, if you can't bate the divil round the stump I niver see it done, an' small thanks to ye for your direction." Said Mrs. McClure setting out with a masculine stride over the hills. She was somewhat out of breath and much out of temper when she reached the adobe wall, and she muttered to herself over and over again:

"Famale ghoul, indade an' a dead child, as if I'd not lost foive beautiful childrun, all of thim with the masles, which there little skins bein' so tanned by the wind an' the sun, shure not a masle 'ud come out, but turned the other way to their inside, an' carried thim off."

She opened the gate of the mud wall, and to her surprise saw her husband knocking at the weather-stained door of the house.

"Phat are ye doin' here, Alexander McClure, now?" said Biddy, halting in astonishment.

"I tried to surprise ye by bringing a bairn for ye, Biddy," replied McClure humbly.

"Faith now you're a thoughtful man, nixt to the Irish about as foine as kin be found. Two heads is better nor wan—we'll both take a hand in it."

Mr. McClure having rung the bell, Mrs. McClure tried a second time, the result was satisfactory and startling; the door opened outward suddenly, and a man and woman stood confronting them. The man held a candle over his head trying to see their faces.

"They're a murderin' lot," said Biddy under her breath; but undaunted as ever she stepped forward, and said with an effort to be polite.

"Is this a place where there is orphans to give away?"

"Wot business is it of your'n?" said the man with the lamp. "You don't want none, poor as you air!" The woman with him giggled spitefully.

"I'd not have the ginerosity if I was rich to wanter git a poor little innercint outer your clutches, which bein' not well to do, but always comfortable, I do wanter; so if there's a innercint in there you'd like to git a good home for, an' no trouble arterwards by sendin' back, I'm that pusson."

"We take great pains with our inmates," said the Rev. Jonas, unbending a little. "We don't want em' to fall inter evil, shiftless ways, reflecting on our management; we b'lieve in moderit kerrection. Ef we was ter give a orphan ter yer how'd we know but it 'ud fall inter evil ways—him there, for instance, might now be one ter think kerrection not needful," went on Jonas, looking slyly at Alexander, who, from the moment he had set his honest Scotch eyes on Green's face, glowered at him with no sign of either interest or belief.

"Oh him!" said Biddy, with vast contempt; "him. indade! It's lucky there's a hed to this fam'ly, sir, an' that hed's me. Now you intrest me, for I've me own notions of bringin' up childers—not too savare, but not to let 'em git the upper hand on ye. Solomon says—an' a wise ould cratur he was—'Spare the rod an' spile the child.' A little batin' now an' thin makes good lads an' foine wimmin."

Here Biddy paused for breath, while her worthy husband shrunk back looking at her in horror.

"Be aisy now," she whispered, when Jonas and his wife had gone in and half closed the door to confer with each other. "See me play the villins;

they'd niver let us have a child if they thought it would have good treatment. Did ye see the ugly in their faces?"

Just then the Rev. Jonas with a chilly attempt at civility, asked them in. Biddy accepted, but insisted on McClure's remaining outside, as she was the head of the family. After a few moments, during which Biddy stared at the Rev. Jonas' portrait with a look of sardonic admiration, the Greens returned, driving before them the orphan they had to give away. A thin little girl, with great, hollow blue eyes, and close-cropped yellow hair—a dirty child in ragged pinafore—for the "company" one was not needed on this occasion.

"Phat is its name?" said Biddy sourly, "an' is that the stoutest one ye have?"

"It's the only one we'd let go," said Jonas impressively. "We do it because she is inordinately (lingering with a kind of enjoyment on the large word that by some mysterious agency had come to him at that moment) inordinately wicious."

"Wicious, indeed!" added Mrs. Green. "No one's hardly safe with her."

"She looks it," said Biddy, scowling. "Batin' 'll take it outer her. Phat's your name? Shure I asked yer afore; are ye deaf?"

"Jane," answered the child, sullenly, lifting her violet eyes to the stranger's face. There was no hope there.

"Jane," said the Rev. Jonas, solemnly, "you air

about to go forth. Your career here has bin one of fiendish ingratitood an' wice, lyin' an' stealin'. That woman wants a orphen, me an' Mis' Green looks about us for one. We lights on you. Why? The arnsur is, you have bin called an' found wantin', you have bin corruptin' old an' young, an' once took a carvin' knife to you kind mistress. Wot you'll take to this woman"—(Biddy's clothes were shabby and cheap, hence Mr. Green felt it his duty to prune all flourishes from his address)"--I don't know, it mebbe pitchforks, axes, or table knives, if they is sharp enough, but seldom is for a weppen. Take wot you will, it can't matter to us, for when we shuts them doors on yer they never open to yer agin. Paradise on earth is shet to ye forever, an' yet you still look sulky."

"Not a tear," added Mrs. Green; "hardened young brute!"

"Indade she is," cried Biddy, enthusiastically. "Shure one 'ud think she'd wape her eyes out leavin' this butiful place an' you koind folks. She'll not find sich keer with me, an' the work'll be hard you may belave."

"Not too hard," said Jonas meaningly; "you've heered of the Johnsons here?"

Biddy's face flushed, an angry light flamed in her eyes; but she restrained herself and grinned knowingly.

"Oi'll kape insoide the law. Now Jane, we'll go."

"Wait a moment," said Jonas mildly; "we would like your name and where you are going."

"That's soon answered," answered Biddy smoothly. "His'n is Tim Rafferty mine's Ann Rafferty, we're goin' to Kansas to a farm we own."

"That's satisfactory," said Jonas, making an entry in a little book he carried in his pocket; "satisfactory, indeed. You kin go now an' it would be well ef you want ter keep the child, ter keep this ter yourself."

"Can't ye say good-by, ye hathan?" said Biddy, grabbing Jane's arm up in a hasty way, as if she were in great hurry.

"Done wanter! Hate 'em," screamed Jane; "I hate yer too. I stole all the time from the pantry, crep in an' got the key outer their room. Them thought it wuz rats."

Jonas reached out a wrathful, lean arm to strike the impudent little creature, but Biddy with a dexterous movement swung Jane outside the door and closed it after her. At the gate McClure was waiting.

"Here's the orphan," whispered Biddy, as if Jane were a bundle of stolen goods, "an' all the lies I've tould thim two ould divils! Here's her bony hand, Alax, take it in your'n; shure she's a mere wisp of a gurl—now the other paddie, sis—here we be; now one, two, three—for a run over the hills to town an' clean outer the clutches of thim two."

They set out on a wild run, Jane keeping up with

the two old travelers; but she was sadly confused, for the woman she thought was going to beat and abuse her actually stooped down before starting to give her a motherly kiss. Near the town McClure dashed ahead—for Biddy had told the story of her call as they ran and he went to get the team ready.

That night a white covered wagon drawn by two weary old mules cheated out of a night's rest left Denver and set out over the mountains to Coyote Gulch, where McClure had a claim, and where he hoped to find a fortune.

McClure's claim was at the head of the gulch and he sunk a shaft above it on the hill. He worked there for six years while his wife kept a little store for the miners, did their washing and took some of them to board. Little Jane, loving both of her adopted parents, helped them all she could, and was happy the day long. One day McClure came down the gulch with a hurried step; he went straight to his log cabin and into the kitchen, where his wife was frying antelope steak over a blazing fire. It was a hot July day, and the perspiration was running down her red face. Jane was sitting on the window-sill knitting a stocking for him, great pride she took in it, too. He walked slowly in, then deliberately kicked the frying-pan off the stove to the floor. Jane looked up in terror, but Biddy replaced the pan, swept the meat into the wood-box, fetched him a chair, and stood surveying him, her arms akimbo.

"You ain't a drinkin' man, McClure; tain't that now. It's a strike!"

"You've guessed it," said McClure faintly; "I've struck the mither lode. God bless her, and a sik mithers, we're reech, Biddy!"

The gulch rejoiced at McClure's good luck. The tidings spread, and the whole country around was riddled with shafts; but no one ever had such fortune again, and the "Bonny Jean" mine, became known throughout the West. Jane was Jane no longer; McClure had christened her Jean, and seldom a night passed in the log cabin but he took her on his knee, and sang to her, the sweet poem of Burns.

"Of a' the airts the wind can blaw
I dearly love the west,
For there the bonnie lassie lives,
The lassie I lo'e best,
There wild woods grow, and rivers row,
And mony a hill between;
But day and night my fancy's flight
Is ever with my Jean.

I see her in the dewy flowers
I see her sweet and fair;
I hear her in the tuneful birds,
I hear her charm the air;
There's not a bonnie flower that springs,
By fountain, shaw or green,
There's not a bonnie bird that sings
But minds me o' my Jean."

He played the bagpipe, too, and Jean could dance the Highland fling right prettily, Biddy joined many a time when she was in the mood, but was better at an Irish jig.

McClure was a wonderfully gifted man, for he

was without education save that he had acquired himself. He had traveled the world over, catching many languages; he was a fair artist, and some of his sketches taken in his rambles showed ability, and he was a natural musician, self-taught. Biddy loved and appreciated him, and he her; her ready wit, her unfailing good nature and courage had saved his neck many a time. But in Jean he found his greatest happiness. She could sing like a bird, dance like a fairy; she would amuse him for hours at a time with her bright fancies; she always sat beside him while he worked in the mine, and he called her the luck. The gold was the glint of her yellow hair.

Jean had grown beautiful. Her face was plump and rosy, her violet eyes bright with happiness; rarely lovely under long, dark lashes. Her hair, yellow as gold, grew in soft curls catching every gleam of sunlight. McClure often wondered who her parents were. He looked at her dainty hands and little feet; they were the signs of good blood. Her ancestors had not toiled in the field. Her finger-nails were pointed and pink-tinted, and her skin, save where the sun had darkened it a shade or two, was white as snow.

When the "Bonny Jean" proved a bonanza, Biddy took Jean East. In a quiet coast city in Massachusetts was an old maid with whom Biddy had lived a few years when she came, a raw Irish girl, in the steerage to America. This lady had a school

then, but age and failing health had forced her to give it up. She lived alone, poor and lonely, in a big white house on an elm-shaded street, and sometimes, sad to relate, the fine old gentlewoman had neither money nor food in her house. It was in one of the seasons of privations that Biddy and Jean came. Biddy explained that she and the child wanted to be educated and instructed, so they might make a good appearance with their new-found wealth.

Miss Franklin, a sweet-mannered, white-haired lady, welcomed them gladly; and, when in two years McClure came for his wife, she begged for Jean to remain. The child, loving her new home and studies, was left behind, while McClure and his wife went back to bonnie Scotland and to Ireland. They stayed two years abroad, and after they returned, went to Miss Franklin's, where they found their adopted daughter grown into a beautiful woman, as graceful and refined as if there never had been a grimy little creature called Jane. McClure went wild over her; he was never tired of quoting:

"There's not a bonnie flower that springs
By mountain, shaw or green;
There's not a bonnie bird that sings
But minds me of my Jean."

One night she astonished him by sitting down to the piano in Miss Franklin's quaint, old-time parlor, and singing the words. He asked Miss Franklin many questions, all of which that fine old lady answered truthfully and happily. Miss Jean knew

more than any young lady she had ever taught, she was a lady in mind and heart, pure as the snow. She knew and cared to know no one but her teacher and the teachers who came to give her lessons. Miss Franklin added with righteous rejoicing. "Miss Jean had never even spoken to a young man in her life in Weymouth."

McClure was delighted; he sometimes feared Jean's early life might have made her less decorous in mind and manners; but he was mistaken. For all she ever showed of the old wild days they might never have happened. Perhaps it was because the chance of an education came so late that Jean loved books and worked with such zeal; or it may have been because Miss Franklin was an ideal lady to her, and far different from any she had ever seen that Jean loved and imitated her. However it was, Miss Franklin was right; there was not a stately lily in her garden so fair, so sweet as Jean in the first flush of her young womanhood. She saw the world only through Miss Franklin's eyes; she had no knowledge of its vice and evil. The coarse, vile people, the horrors of her childhood, she had outgrown, and there were no errors of her own in her girlhood to mar her purity.

McClure and his wife went back to Denver; they loved the place for its glorious climate, its sunny skies, and the silent grandeur of the mountains—a nobler prospect than any other city can furnish in a free land among a free people. McClure bought

land in Highland, across the Platte. Denver and West Denver had grown, but Highland stayed almost as in the first years of its settlement. Here McClure built a veritable palace. He chose the highest ground he could; he had an unbroken view of miles of mountains, he looked down on the bridged river, the creek, and the city beyond. On one side lay the plains, the infinite plains grander in their vastness than the sublimity of the mountains—as monotonous as the sea—as great, as terrible! On the other side of his palace was the quaint house Judge Wallace had built, where his sad daughter, with her old servants and her maid, lived a lonely, dreary life. The old house was covered with vines; they twined around the pillars, clung to the windows and doors, and mounted to the roof. Close to the house fine cottonwoods grew and hid its old-time architecture from curious eyes. It was a house wherein the princess might have slept till the prince came to awaken her. It was so quiet, so shady, it seemed as if the trees and vines conspired to hide the sad victim of misfortune and the sin of others.

Virginia Wallace, grown old and white-haired in the six years—watched the building of the great house, watched the pink stone and the gray, artistically mingled; saw it rise from foundation to arched roof—watched queer windows, cornices, porticoes, all adding to the beauty and grace of the whole; saw the chimneys grow brick by brick; saw the

stable, then the horses; saw the barren ground laid out as a green lawn, and big trees torn from their forest homes brought to the lawn to live again in a brighter world. She saw from her shaded window great drays coming and going, and the fine furnishings arriving; she grew to like the lively little gray-haired man who was anywhere and everywhere and when nothing else was to be done sat down and sketched a corner or bit of his palace. She knew he was the owner—Lucky McClure—and the dignified lady in black silk, who seemed so devoted to him, was his wife. She half regretted, half liked the new life in her quiet neighborhood; then she would sink back idly in her chair:

"Why should I think of them or their coming!" she would say to herself. "It will never matter to me!"

CHAPTER X

MISS FRANKLIN'S HOME

" 'There wild woods grow and rivers row,
And mony a hill between,
But day and night my fancy's flight
Is ever with my Jean.' "

So wrote old McClure to Jean, adding with loving words that she must come to her new home in September. It would be completed then and he could not spare her any longer; kind Miss Franklin must come with her

Jean read the letter, sitting on the wide veranda that ran around the white house. The green blinds were closed, even then the sun heated the still, dark rooms fragrant with lavender and cleanliness. On the veranda it was cool in the afternoon for the great elm gave a refreshing shade, and the breeze from the blue harbor with its dancing white-caps came straight up the green hill to the old house.

"I shall miss the water," sighed Jean, with a wistful look at the waves; "there is only a shallow stream in Denver."

"Well dear," said Miss Franklin, "you have another home, not far off, where you can get the sea-breezes."

"I know it," said Jean lovingly; "I shall be home-

sick for Weymouth—beautiful old town by the sea! Only a month, then no more rows for me! In view of that," she added briskly, "it behooves us to take our boat and row up the cove; the tide is high."

"But look at the white caps!" objected Miss Franklin, timorously.

"We'll surmount them; it's calmer in here; we won't go out in the harbor."

Miss Franklin was persuaded, and provided herself with veil, gloves and several shawls, as if she were going on a long journey to cold regions. Jean donned a dark blue, sailor suit with impossible white anchors embroidered on the collar, and a nautical hat such as merry tars wear on the stage, which consequently is never seen elsewhere.

Their boat was moored at the foot of the lawn. They stepped aboard, Jean untied the painter and took up the oars. After they had rowed for some time—and exciting work it was, for the wind began to freshen—the quiet of the cove was invaded by a youth paddling about in a Rob Roy canoe. Miss Franklin put on her spectacles and took a calm survey of him.

"Jean, it's that rude young man who stared at you so in church last Sunday. We'll go right in," she said with asperity.

"Oh dear, and it's so pleasant, too," sighed Jean.

"What is so pleasant?" asked Miss Franklin; 'not that young man's impudent attempts to race with you?"

"I never noticed him," said Jean, innocently, but a little color crept into her face. "I mean the afternoon, the water is so lovely sparkling in the sun, and I'm to lose it all so soon."

"The wind will give me neuralgia," said Miss Franklin.

"It has given you a lovely color," smiled Jean sending her boat ahead of the impertinent young man's. "Don't you really think it would flatter him if we went in? He would think we noticed him, and were offended. After all, we have the most right to the cove."

"Indeed we have," asserted Miss Franklin, remembering an old time bitterness. "My father owned the flats here clear to the channel, the town cheated him out of them and the mill across there actually used to float logs here, and never paid a cent of rent. I was really glad when the saw-mill man failed. Jean, he is ahead of you now," said Miss Franklin with much animation. "He paddles like the pictures of Indians in the geography, but what an unsafe boat! It must be hollow, for he seems half buried in it. Do look at that flaw strike it. It cants away over."

"Ahead, is he?" panted Jean; "he won't stay so."

She rowed with all her might, while Miss Franklin took a lively interest in the race, making an extra veil fast and hauling in the slack of a shawl to be ready for emergencies. Jean was now along-

side the canoeist, and the impudent young man watched her with a smile, paddling all the time in that provokingly skillful way. Just as the boats were abreast, a puff of wind came skimming over the water, caught Jean's hat, snapped the ribbons and flung it overboard. Jean grasped for it, but it was out of her reach; and the canoeist made a wild grab in vain. The hat bobbed up on a wave, then began to sink slowly.

"I'll get it," said the young man.

"It's of no consequence," answered Jean gathering up her yellow curls the wind was blowing into her eyes.

The young fellow was obstinate to his cost; he paddled up to the hat, took its bearings with a nautical eye, then reached for it. He reached too far, and he, the hat, and the canoe all went down together. Miss Franklin shrieked, but Jean seized her oars. She rowed up to the spot where the canoe was visible. Just then, like a strange marine animal, a head and arms appeared above the water, and a voice yelled:

"My legs are caught in the canoe; I'm sinking," and down the head went again.

Miss Franklin cried for help, but Jean rowed closer to the canoe; then she waited till the black head came up again. She knelt in the bottom of the boat, and reached for it. The hair was close-cropped, giving no hold; her fingers ran through it, but succeeded in fastening to his collar. He kicked

strenuously, and struggled, then came up like a waterman; the canoe righted and bobbed off on the top of a wave, half full of water; the paddle swam gaily along while the wet young man clung to the boat at the imminent risk of upsetting that.

"You have saved my life," he said to Jean.

Oh dear, no," she stammered, "you can swim."

'Not without feet," he returned calmly. "I was caught in that canoe like a trap. Here's your hat." He held up the wet draggled thing. "It's spoilt," he said ruefully.

"Perhaps, Jean, you had better ask the gentleman into the boat," murmured Miss Franklin, with the air of a hostess. "This side of our boat is too near the water, and he must be uncomfortable."

"Thank you," he said, accepting the offer with alacrity. "It is more comfortable, but I am sadly damp. May I trouble you to row in the direction of my canoe, to enable me to rescue it, so I can have some way of getting back to town?"

They rescued the boat and paddle, and Jean rowed to the shore.

"I think, sir," said Miss Franklin, with reluctant politness, "you had better come up to our house and dry your clothes. I can let you have a suit of my father's. You see how black that sky is becoming; we are going to have a thunder shower."

"You are very kind," said the young man gratefully; "I will accept your offer, for I have been off a sick bed only two weeks—brain fever—and this

bath may give me a relapse. I ought to introduce myself," he went on, tying their boat for them and dragging the canoe up on the beach.

"Will Curtis. I am staying with Charley Hall, your minister's son; he was my chum at Yale. We graduated in June, I know who you are—Miss Franklin, and Miss McClure. Charley told me. His father talks so much of Miss Franklin that it seems as if I knew her, too; and I hear Miss McClure has been West—to Denver. I spent some years of my life there in the early days."

"That is delightful," said Jean shyly. "We can compare notes; for I am going there to live in September, and I want to refresh my memory."

They hurried to the house, as the first warning peal of thunder came rattling across the sky.

"My father's clothing is, of course, old fashioned," said Miss Franklin, conducting the young man to one of her immaculate bedrooms; "but he was tall, as you are—six feet in his stocking feet. You will find his suit in the clothes press, and Ann will attend to your wet clothing. Come down to the sitting-room then."

Jean coaxed Miss Franklin to let her have the key of an old trunk in the attic.

"Dear Auntie," she pleaded, "it will be so quaint, you will think you have gone back to the days of your girlhood." Finally Miss Franklin consented for she never could refuse Jean.

After some difficulty Will got into the deceased

gentleman's suit. It was of black velvet, with knee-breeches, a ruffled white shirt, gay flowered vest, and quaintly fashioned coat. Neatly folded in a drawer were black silk stockings and in a box a pair of buckled shoes. A handsome old-time gentlemen young Will looked, only requiring the powdered hair to make him an eighteenth century beau. Long lace ruffles fell about his hands, over his vest, while the rich velvet softened his bronzed skin, and gave luster to his fine dark eyes.

"I wish my hair wasn't so short," he muttered, "it don't suit. "But this is a jolly lark though."

He went down to the parlor where he found Miss Franklin knitting by the fire.

"You look well in that costume," she smiled pointing to a chair near the hearth, "I had a fire built. It is chilly now and the wind blows. It will be a terrible night."

"How cozy it is," said Will, warming his hands at the blaze, looking at the old-time room with its queer figured paper, its oak wainscoting, the heavy mahogany furniture, the high carved mantel over the fire-place and the dim old family portraits around the walls. On the table was a silver candelabrum with six wax candles. He felt as if he had wandered a century back, as if the adventure were a dream. The only modern figure would be Jean, he thought. Just then she came in softly through the high doorway, and stood a moment in the shadow, looking at him with sweet, laughing face.

She had donned a blue and silver brocade with plain, full skirt gathered to a pointed basque. Around her white neck was a soft lace handkerchief fastened with a painted brooch. She had combed her hair in a knot at the top of her head, and fastened it with a blue enameled comb. On her dainty feet were blue satin slippers a Cinderella might have worn. She took a high-backed old chair by the fire, adjusting her skirts with a queer little gesture all her own.

"Am I dreaming?" he asked. "The room, the fire, the candles, you—have we gone back a hundred years?"

"I felt so when I came in," said Jean. "I looked at you, and your resemblance to an old portrait on the wall there made me start. Who was the gentleman, Auntie, the one who frowns, and whose great, dark eyes haunt one so? I never saw such sad eyes in a portrait."

Will rose and looked at the portrait.

"Do tell me about him!" he pleaded with his winning smile.

"It's only a short, sad story," said Miss Franklin, with a gentle pride that she had ancestors and could tell about them. "He was my grandfather's brother and lived in Weymouth—the house has gone to ruin long ago. He was loyal to the colonists and fought in the Revolution. But the woman he loved (she was fair like you Jean; I have a little miniature of her upstairs) was the daughter of a

colonist who was a spy for the British while wearing the garb of a Revolutionist. He betrayed many plans, and one night sent his daughter with letters to the British camp. She passed a picket safely, but General Franklin, Captain then, saw the figure from his tent and shot her, thinking it a man in disguise and a spy. When he got to her she was dying. She only held up the letter murmuring 'I deserved it,' and died in his arms. He never recovered from the shock. After the war he came back to Weymouth, where he lived a lonely life. One night during a terrible storm he came riding down the street to the wharf at full speed on his great black horse. People saw him, but never knew whether he meant it or was confused by the darkness and the bright lightning, or whether he could not control his mad horse; but they saw by a red flash of lightning, horse and rider hover a moment on the brink of the old pier and then disappear in the furious waves. They found the body in the morning, and buried him in our old lot here, but Dorothy Neal, his love, lies in the old graveyard at Concord, where they say the moss and decay of years have obliterated her name from the slate tombstone. Now Ann comes with supper," said Miss Franklin rising; "so we will return to the nineteenth century."

Ann set the tea on a quaint, claw-footed table, and drew it near the fire, then (as is the fashion of well-meaning old servants) stopped to admire the company and give her opinion.

"Them two looks for all the world like the picters in books, or the portraits on the wall."

The dainty supper was served on china thin as egg-shells. Jean poured the tea from a silver tea-pot a hundred yards old. Will did justice to the trout, cold chicken, biscuit, and cake.

"The trout Jean caught," said Miss Franklin; "she and I go fishing almost every day. She is very expert now, but I think suffers torture taking the fish off the hooks. She fishes and I knit. I used to fish with my brother long years ago. I have lived my girlhood over in Jean, now that I am old."

"You will never be old," said Jean lovingly.

After Ann had cleared away the tea things Miss Franklin said Mr. Curtis could not go back to town. It was over a mile to the minister's and the storm was getting worse. They could hear the wild roar around the house while torrents of rain beat against the windows.

"Jean shall sing for us," added Miss Franklin. Will thought then he could stay forever.

"Shall I bring the light?" he asked as Jean went to the misty darkness at the end of the room and opened the piano.

"I like the dark best to sing in," she answered simply; "I seldom use notes."

She sang sweet Scotch ballads, and Irish melodies, then that pathetic song—"Three fishers went sailing out into the sea." Her voice was a contral-

to, soft and tender, a voice to make tears come and give new beauty to old songs.

"Sing your father's song," said Miss Franklin. "He is always singing it to Jean. You will find it in the book of Burns beside you there. I think of Jean always as a child who loved the Scotch poet, who read his poetry when other girls hungered for novels, and who somehow seemed to me a figure out of his sweetest poetry—a Highland lassie."

Will took up the book and read the poem Jean was singing. When she had finished, he said with some shyness:

"That was beautiful, Miss McClure; but see, here is another little poem, "The Northern Lass," on the same subject, you name, I mean. I like this better, though they say Burns did not write it."

Tho' cruel fate should bid us part,
  Far as the pole and line;
Her dear idea round my heart
  Should tenderly entwine.

Tho' mountains frown and deserts howl,
  And oceans roar between
Yet dearer than my deathless soul,
  I still would love my Jean.

"That is for a lover to sing," said Miss Franklin, "I hope it will be many, many years before one finds her. Jean must know no sorrows."

"Enough of Jean," laughed Jean. "Do you play chess, Mr. Curtis?" He did. She brought out the board and the chessmen of ivory wonderfully carved, Miss Franklin watched the pretty picture they made in the firelight until she fell asleep and her knitting

dropped unheeded. She slept as gracefully as she did everything else, covering her face with a lace handkerchief.

"I have beaten you two games," scolded Jean. "Are you playing your best?"

"No," he said frankly, "I was thinking."

"Of what?"

"Of you. How different you are from all the young ladies I ever saw. What a quiet life you have here, beautiful as a poem, and how strange the world you must enter will be to you."

"What do you know of my future?" she said, surprised.

"Charley Hall told me of your father and his wealth that you are the only child. You will be flattered and honored as an heiress always is. I think though, you will miss something in life. I know sometimes you will long for your happy days here."

"You are voicing my own thoughts," sighed Jean, putting the chess-board away and picking up Miss Franklin's knitting. He watched her white, ringless fingers flit to and fro with the bright needles and scarlet silk.

"That is a grandmotherly accomplishment. How well you do it; your fingers fairly fly," he said, admiringly.

"I learned when I was a little girl and that brings me back to Denver. You said you were there once?"

"Yes, when I was about ten, but I do not like to

speak of Denver. My mother died there, and is buried on a wind-swept hill; I remember how bleak and barren it was. I was a sad little child, there —I missed her—I have always missed her; I always shall. My father married again. I like Mrs. Curtis, she is good-natured and kind; but you know one's own mother is different."

"I have no mother," said Jean, a tear glistening on her long eyelashes. "Father McClure adopted me; but he and his dear wife are my father and mother as much as if I were their own. I do not want to speak of Denver, for away back before they took me I was such a miserable little child. Oh, I can not bear to think of it. I cry sometimes at the thought of going back—but I am very wrong to talk to you in this way," she cried abruptly. "Why even auntie doesn't know that I dread to go back."

"I began it first," he said with an air of penitence." I bored you with my woes. Do you know the last two Sundays I saw you in church I felt as if I should know you sometime, though Charley said you were kept in as closely as a nun."

"He is impertinent," frowned Jean.

"Well, you don't go out much, you know. Why I haunted this cove for a long time and bore all Miss Franklin's frowns."

"Then you planned to meet me?," Jean asked.

"Of course not. How was I to know your hat would blow overboard? I did think, perhaps you might fall overboard and I could rescue you; I never dreamed you would rescue me."

"It served you right," said Jean.

Then Miss Franklin awoke, much surprised that it was ten o'clock and bed-time, and that she had been asleep. She begged to be excused, and rang for Ann, who brought in some wine and little seed cakes.

"It was my father's custom always, before retiring," said Miss Franklin, "therefore I continue it, though Jean seldom keeps me company. Then she is young, and doesn't need anything to make her sleep."

"I'm not very old, but I like that wine," said Will. "I think your father must have been a very thoughtful old gentleman." He was going to say "pretty level-headed" but checked himself in time. He felt slang would be profanity here.

He slept that night in a four-post bedstead with curtains, where he dreamed Miss Franklin's father came in the airy costume of a shroud, and with hollow voice demanded his clothing profaned by the stranger, stretching his skeleton hand for it.

"It must have been that confounded wine," muttered Will when he woke at daylight.

He found his clothing neatly dried at the door, dressed himself and returned to the nineteenth century. He went down stairs, where Miss Jean in a bewitching white dress was gathering roses in the garden.

"We were waiting for you," she said. "We have breakfast in the summer-house." He followed her

to a repast of strawberries and cream, steak, and delicious coffee.

"You have a fine cook," he said.

"Jean got breakfast," smiled Miss Franklin. "This is our prosaic wash-day and Ann is busy."

He wondered if there was anything Jean could not do, and what his sister Maud would say if her parents requested her to get breakfast. He felt he was banished from Eden when he went away carrying in the lapel of his coat a rose and sprig of mignonette Jean picked for him, or rather that he asked of her.

Poor, dear Miss Franklin had no idea what would follow, and was powerless now to prevent it; but she rejoiced Jean was going away in a month. She could not help liking Will Curtis with his honest, manly ways, his politeness and respect to her and his invariable courtesy. He and Charley Hall and Mr. and Mrs. Hall were her frequent visitors; they organized picnics, rows and rides, always in a party, so Miss Franklin thought there could be no harm in this. Will was at times furiously jealous of Charley Hall, admitting enviously the "fellow was good looking," etc. Jean was always the same, and seemed really to like the old minister the best of them all.

The happy month of August passed, and one night, the first of September, Will brought a letter from the postoffice for Miss Jean McClure, postmarked Denver. He felt this letter meant her de-

parture, that she would go away and forget him—he would only be an acquaintance to her, but she was all the world to him!

CHAPTER XI

A SENATORIAL RIVAL

They were at tea when Will came in, and there was Charley Hall, making himself "infernally agreeable, of course."

"Here's a letter for you Miss McClure," said Will, with much stiffness. He refused tea, fanning himself with his hat in a sulky manner.

Jean took the letter with trembling hands. She read it, and said, with a break in her voice:

"We must start in two days, auntie. Father writes that Senator Brooks, a friend of his whom he met abroad, will come for us. He is going West. That will be pleasant for us."

"Delightful," exclaimed Miss Franklin. "Senator Brooks? An old gentleman, probably, who will look after us and our baggage, and relieve me of a care I dreaded."

"Brooks isn't much over forty," said Will, gloomily. "He is a lumberman; owns forests and mills; unmarried, too." He went on making the worst of the case. "He is a friend of my father's. I know him; he is—well, he isn't a bad looking man. They think him a great catch in New York."

"This is indeed pleasant," said Miss Franklin ma-

liciously, for poor Will openly showed a hopeless jealousy at which she took offense. "He will probably be here to-night, if we start the day after to-morrow."

They went out on the veranda then, Charley Hall still agreeable, but Will silent and morose. At 8 o'clock the Weymouth hack drove up the avenue and an elegant gentleman alighted. A man of forty-five or thereabouts, with gray hair and mustache, and agreeable presence. He introduced himself as Thomas Brooks; he bowed low when he was introduced to Miss McClure, very stiffly when Mr. Hall was mentioned, but bestowed on Will a careless nod.

"Ah, Bill." he said, "your mother is expecting you at Newport."

To be called Bill—vulgar Bill—and to be told his mother was expecting him was too much for Mr. Curtis' dignity. He bowed coldly and took his leave followed by Mr. Hall, also in a gloomy mood.

"I hate that man," said Will fiercely, when they were out of earshot. "He thinks he is somebody because he bought a seat in the United States Senate; anybody could that would put up the money; it doesn't need brains, or education, or even intelligence."

"He is an ass," said Charley, a melancholy echo.

Senator Brooks made himself so entertaining, both ladies were delighted they were to have such a pleasant traveling companion. Miss Franklin in-

sisted on his staying at the house, and the next day he took the ladies for a farewell drive around Weymouth.

The last night of Jean's stay in town of course, the Halls came to say good-bye, and Charley with them, but no Mr. Curtis. Jean noticed his absence, thinking with disappointment he might, at least have called to say farewell. Notwithstanding the Halls were so pleasant and Senator Brooks entertaining, she went out on the veranda down the old granite steps to the avenue. She felt that he might be there, and there he was, looking up to the lighted windows like a lost soul shut out from Paradise.

"Why don't you come in, Mr. Curtis? I was afraid I should not see you before I left."

"You cared then," he cried in the accents of despair.

"Of course I did; I like you so well, we have been such friends," she said warmly.

"Mr. Brooks" (with accent on the Mister, ignoring the Senator) "is very agreeable," said Will, viciously.

"He is indeed," Jean answered, mildly.

"Being so old, he has seen a good deal."

"He does not seem old, and he was ever so kind to father abroad."

"I suppose you are glad to go," muttered Will.

"No indeed; I love Weymouth; I have been happy here. But father and mother have spared

me four years, and I must give them my time now."

They had walked up to the steps, where the tall rose bushes beside the walk filled the soft night air with sweet perfume.

"I wish it were always summer, with pleasant friends," said Jean softly. The light from the window shone down on her pure young face with its coronal of golden hair.

"I wish there were no 'good-byes,'" Will echoed, sadly. "You and Miss Franklin have been so kind, so good to me. I have had such a happy month. I thought maybe you would come out a moment; I hoped you would. I did not want to say good-bye to you before them all. You have been so different to me from other women; you are a woman a man would die for—that he could worship as a sweet saint to make him better. Life has been so changed to me since I knew you; nothing will ever be the same to me again—Ah, do not start, Miss McClure—don't look so scared—dear Jean, I am not myself, I'm half mad. All the goodness my mother taught me comes to me when I see you; all unhappiness of my life and surroundings is doubly depressing to go back to. Do not be angry with me; I will not keep you, I will not say another word."

Jean started away from him, frightened by his passionate words, his burning glance.

"Give me a rose—a white rose, like yourself, that is all," he said, hoarsely.

She gave him one tremblingly. He kissed the

hand that held the rose quickly, then he strode away down the path, and slammed the gate behind him. Jean staggered up the steps. Her mind was dazed; she trembled in every limb; she wanted to cry with joy, and yet she was strangely conscience-stricken. Just then Miss Franklin called her, and she deceived that kind friend. She told her she was out taking a farewell look at her old home in the starlight: she did not tell her she was taking a farewell look at Will Curtis, too. Deceit often follows love as naturally as flowers do buds. There is a sweet secrecy in stolen meetings no heart will give to the world.

"What is it to me?" Jean cried that night, looking out of her chamber window in a restless, feverish mood. "What is it to me whether I see him or not? Why do I feel so hopeful, such longing? Why do I remember every word he said, his look, his touch. Ah, I have lost something in my life —I have gained something! It is all a mystery to me! Last night I looked out here, I saw the stars, the old tree. I heard the water lapping against the shore—that was all; but to-night, no matter where I look, what I see I only seem conscious of his face, his dark eyes and, I hear only his words. They were so sweet, so sweet!"

Jean knelt down, her golden head on her folded arms, Miss Franklin coming in softly found her there.

"Homesick at the thought of leaving, Jean?" she said fondly.

"Homesick and heartsick," Jean sobbed, frightened at the thought of her newly awakened love.

They left for the West early the next morning and Jean looked in vain for one who did not come. Will had mounted his horse and gone away from the village before dawn. As the train whirled on she watched the winding roads and farms; at a cross road that ran from a piece of woods across the track to another forest patch she saw a horseman—a motionless horse with erect ears and wide, frightened eyes, and his rider looking with sad face at the train. She knew who it was. She sank back with a little sigh and saw Senator Brooks' eyes fixed on her face. He had seen the horseman, but Miss Franklin, beside Jean, was unconscious of the little scene.

A pleasant journey they had! Mr. Brooks was all kindness and attention, and knew everything there was to know on the way. They crossed the wide plains in a luxurious Pullman car, Brooks, looking back, saw himself a wagon-driver crossing the same tracts of arid land years before, then saw himself returning east a millionaire. What a strange world it was! He dreaded going back. No one would know him, he thought. The population was different now, most of the miners and pioneers had crossed the range and gone prospecting in another world. He started; there was one who would know him—Rose McCord. But he smiled at this thought. She was only a servant girl, probably married now to one of her own class.

"Is that Denver?" Jean asked, one morning as the train neared a city where church spires and grand buildings glistened in the sunlight, while far about it lay beautiful suburban homes. "It's like a city in the Arabian Nights. It has risen in a day; and the blue mountains, the snow-clad peaks, the sunny sky! It is beautiful; it is home."

She was carried away by her surprise but the senator was silent. He saw from the car platform the old wooden house, tree-shaded, vine-clad, with its pillared portico. Near it was a grand stone mansion.

"Where is your home, Miss McClure?" he said, going back to the excited girl.

"At Highland, on the hill, father wrote, next door to an old-time house, where a Miss Wallace lives."

It seemed like fate to Senator Brooks. He felt a presentiment of evil, but laughed at it a moment later.

"Denver!" yelled the brakeman at one end of the car, and "Denver!" he yelled at the other end. The senator helped the ladies out, and the porter carried their baggage. They went to the waiting-room of the depot but hardly opened the door before the door on the other side opened, and a lady and gentleman rushed in.

"I told ye we'd be late, McClure," said the lady.

"There she is, my Jean!" shouted the old man, rushing across the room; "more beautiful than ever,

and actually crying for joy. Senator, how do you do? Miss Franklin, God bless you. You're as welcome as the buds in spring. Bid—Mrs. McClure, I mean—you know the Senator? Where was it? Oh, Venice; I fell overboard, and you dragged me up; and that other place, Mount Vesuvius wasn't it? Wife got her petticoats afire and you put it out—that treacherous lava looked cool, but red hot—No hack, we've carriages of our own." He went on, ushering the party to a retired corner of the depot. "Why of course, you're coming to the house, Senator; I would never forgive you if you went to a hotel. I brought the buggy; you and I will ride up together. Mrs. McClure, you take Miss Franklin and Jean with you. What do you think of that black span, Senator? Good horseflesh, eh? Kentucky thoroughbreds—blue grass. Be careful of the ladies, Jim; they're mighty precious."

Talking and engineering the party, McClure got the ladies in the carriage and set out in the buggy with the senator. What a happy old man he was; if ever a man did good, made the world happier, and enjoyed every dollar of his money, it was Lucky McClure. His carriage was the finest made, satin-lined, blue—to match Jean's eyes, he said. Jean lay back in it while just a bit of pride in her luxury and state crept into her innocent heart. Miss Franklin sat up so straight and dignified she was quite a sight to behold. Biddy had grown fat with

prosperity, and developed with a matronly plumpness, much liking for dress and the things denied in her wandering life. She had educated herself to be ladylike, and having a noble, kind heart, made no mistakes at which the world could laugh.

Virginia Wallace was sitting by her bedroom window when the carriage drove up. She saw Mrs. McClure getting out; she and that good-natured lady were warm friends. No one could withstand the sunshine of Biddy's sweet disposition. Then a grayhaired lady alighted with much state, followed by a beautiful girl in blue.

"How lovely she is!" Miss Virginia said aloud; her companion, Rose McCord, joined her at the window.

A great catch, too, Miss Wallace; McClure's worth his millions. That must be the Jean they talked about."

"A sweet girl," said Miss Wallace, dreamily. "I hope no unscrupulous fortune-hunter will win her. There is the buggy; Mr. McClure has company, too."

They looked at the new arrival; Miss Wallace heard a moan, then Rose McCord staggered and fell lifeless to the floor. The stranger had gone in; Rose could not have known him, and she had not seemed ill. Why had she fainted? Miss Wallace did not stop for conjecture but hurried to bring Rose back to life, for she had grown to care for her as a sister.

One afternoon while the gentlemen were out Miss Wallace announced her intention of visiting the new mansion, and made her first call in twenty years. Mrs. McClure was highly pleased, and Jean straightway fell in love with the sweet, white-haired lady with the sad face and violet eyes, whose black and crape seemed as if it had been a life-long attire. Miss Franklin was also delighted; she was quick to see that the stranger was a lady. Jean sang for her, and talked to her of her Weymouth life; and Miss Wallace felt an interest in the happy, bright girl she never had in any one before. After this they were great friends, Jean spending much of her time at the old house, or driving with Miss Wallace in the cumbersome old family carriage drawn by two fat, lazy horses. Jean had a sympathetic nature; she saw that her new friend had suffered, she felt her young life brightened and cheered this woman whose face bore such deep lines of sorrow.

Rose McCord looked on the new intimacy with jealousy; one day she slipped over to the stone mansion and asked for the laundress. The servants told her Mrs. Cowan was down in the basement, wondering why she should seek her; for Rose held her head high, allowing no familiar speech with any of the neighboring servants. She went down to the laundry, where a thin, dark woman was folding clothes. Rose shut the door and went up to the woman.

"Do you know me?" she said.

"I'd think so nigh enuff," muttered the woman.

"Did you know me a good while ago?" Rose continued.

"Never see yer afore I come here."

"That is a lie," said Rose calmly, seating herself. "I know you. Your husband was shot by the son of the old woman your husband almost starved to death—an old woman found chained to a wall in a filthy room. You are Mrs. Green."

"For God's sake don't talk so loud. It 'ud ruin me," sobbed the woman, sinking to the floor, rocking herself to and fro, "I've been hounded for years. I took another name. I've worked in the mountains, in Cheyenne, an' here, where I've a good place an' pay. Wot hev you agin me? Have pity on me an' let me stay here till I die."

"I have no wish to hurt you," said Rose, kindly; "though you played me a mean trick about that child, who was a near relative of mine. Never mind that, however."

"It was Jonas," sobbed the woman.

"Maybe; but what I want to know is who took the child?"

"McGinnis, or some such name," sniffled Mrs. Green, under her apron.

"You are lying," said Rose, coldly. "You cannot deceive me; I have only to tell them who you are and you will be turned away. Come, be sensible; tell me what you know. I shall never break faith with you."

"What'll I git outer it?" said the woman, slyly.

"My check for $150. I have money in the bank here; I don't care for it; Miss Wallace gives me all I want. She will leave me plenty when she dies. I have made the check out. Now, why have I done it? Because I knew who you were; I've watched you till I guessed it. Now your secret is worth more to me than money. I want revenge, which that child can give to me."

"Will it hurt her, too?" asked the hag eagerly, "break her heart, ruin her pride? Oh, I hate her!"

"It will make her life a torment to her," said Rose. "Quick, I will be suspected; where is she? You were too keen to lose all track of her. Where is she? Who took her?"

The woman stretched out her lean hand for the check.

"The story first," said Rose.

"This is true—I swear it," whispered the woman. "Jonas an' I never knowed fur a long spell who hed her, till I found out t'was Lucky McClure. She is that Jean upstairs. He 'dopted her an' brung her up as his'n."

"I might have known," muttered Rose with haggard face. "Is my own sin to rise and curse me? Here is your check. I may want you again. I will pay you for your services if I do."

Then Rose went away, and the miserable wretch hid the check in her bosom.

CHAPTER XII

A LOVER'S QUARREL

When a man past forty is really in love for the first time in his life, the tender passion takes entire possession of him. He is even to be pitied especially when the object is a girl less than half his age. Senator Brooks loved Jean, McClure and his wife favored the suit, as did Miss Franklin. To their simple minds a senator was a great man. Brooks was wealthy, and a man of the world, who would make a good husband. Jean had young lovers in plenty, for she became a great favorite in Denver society, but she seemed to care for none of them. She was heart-whole, therefore her parents did not see any reason why she should not like Mr. Brooks, in time perhaps love him. Jean liked the senator because he was kind and courteous, and her parents liked him; but she dreamed always of a dark, boyish face and glowing eyes.

One day Brooks got a letter from New York. It was a business letter, but had a postcript which ran:

"By the way, Will is out in your neighborhood somewhere. He was crazy to go, and I had to let him. Keep an eye on him if you can, and don't let

him get into any scrapes with women. You know I intend him to marry my partner's daughter; you know me too well to think I will allow anything to thwart me. Mrs. C. sends love," etc.

That evening the door bell of the McClure mansion sounded a modest ring, and the old Scotchman whom McClure had unearthed from some haunt of his childhood in Scotland, announced "Meester Curtis," and Will, in his finest attire made a shy entrance into the brilliantly lighted parlor. He went through the introduction nervously, Miss Franklin's welcome was warm and kind, then Jean came in giving him a little trembling hand, and he felt as brave as a lion. He surpassed himself, became witty and entertaining, and actually snubbed the senator. McClure took a great liking to him, and Mrs. McClure also; after he was gone they admitted he was a fine manly young fellow. The senator over a late cigar with McClure said Will was a splendid fellow, his father idolized him, and he was to marry the daughter of his father's partner in a year or so.

"Weel, weel, that's right pleasant," said McClure. "I like to see a lad marry young. I was only twenty when Biddy and I met and got married, God bless her!"

But the old man looked with some disapproval on young Will's frequent visits. It seemed like the silly flirting young people of the day indulged in. He never did that; he loved one lass, married her,

and had little to say to others. He wanted his Jean to love one man, marry him, and have no follies to remember. "A lass that's dancing wi' that one, and riding wi' this, and a' the rest, isn't the one that wins the best husband," said McClure to Biddy. "They're apt to have but a puir creature in the end."

Jean had no idea of flirting at all. She liked Will. She did not know he was to marry another, she danced with him, sang for him, and went riding with him, or with the senator, never varying in her courtesy to either.

"It will never do," said McClure; I must tell the child." He was looking at Jean ride off with Will. She looked back and flung him a kiss. "The bonnie thing," he said, fondly. "Such a gentle heart, so loving, so trusting. She'd never think evil o' any one."

The senator came up to talk to him then, and they went to the library.

"Are these sketches yours?" asked the senator, opening a portfolio. "Yes," said McClure shyly. "They're little to boast of but when Biddy—Mrs. McClure—and I were travelers or tramps, I used to take comfort putting the beautiful scenery on paper; and when we worked again to get enough for another journey we used to look at 'em at home, and travel all the roads again; but we settled down here finally, and I went to mining, where I struck it."

"Did you take Miss Jean with you in your wanderings?"

"No" answered McClure, awkwardly, "Jean is an adopted child, but we love her as our own; she shall have all when we are gone."

"You do not know of her parents?"

"No."

"What matters that?" said the senator gravely. "You will wonder at my question, Mr. McClure, but I love Jean. I want to make her my wife. Will you give her to me?"

"Willingly, with all my heart," said McClure, extending his honest hand; "and Bid—Mrs. McClure, too, she likes you, and so does Miss Franklin."

"And Jean?" asked the senator, anxiously.

"That I don't know sir; she may learn to. She is all gentleness, all sweetness but I would not urge her. She shall marry the man she loves, and she won't love one unworthy of her. Where she gives her heart she gives her hand. She is young, only eighteen."

"Yes, young, but she might love wrongly; some one she could not marry—some one bound to another."

"You mean young Curtis," said McClure bluntly; "I will see to that. Jean must not care for another lassie's lover. She is too proud."

When Jean came back for her ride Biddy called her aside, and said, with much mystery, that her father wanted to see her in the library. Jean ran there in her dark blue habit. She sat on the old man's knee, wound her arm around his neck, and laid her soft cheek against his.

"Now I'm ready to be scolded," said she.

"Scold you, Jean, you know I canna'," he said fondly, "my Jean; but dear, do you think you should ride with a young man who loves another lass?"

"Who," cried Jean, her cheek turning pale.

"Young Curtis, dear. His father's partner has a daughter—"

"And he loves her," Jean murmured.

"He must; they are to be married soon. It is his father's wish, nor is he the lad to marry a lass without loving her."

"I will not go again," said Jean bravely. "Is this all?"

"The rest is pleasanter, dear. Do, Jean, let me look into your eyes; your voice sounds strange. Do you love the young man?"

"I do not fling my love away," she said, lifting her head, looking at him with a steadfast gaze.

"I believe you," he answered much relieved. "Well Jean, the senator wants to marry you.

"Me!" cried Jean, leaving McClure, looking at him with horrified face. "Me, father? Oh, dear, no, I never could—you would not want me to! He is kind, I like him; but ah, to marry him, to live side by side, like you and mother, to grow into each other's lives, to feel the same hopes and fears, to walk hand-in-hand every step! Father, could I do that with him? He is so much older than I. I feel hope, I see beauty in the world; he sees none, has outlived belief in good. Would you make a

child the companion of a man? Would you make me his companion? The child must grow to womanhood, and I must live many, many years, to learn to be like him. Put me with him for my best, my dearest friend, my constant companion, and I die stunted, dwarfed, like the elms here in this arid soil. No, no, father; not marriage with the senator!"

"Wise Jean!" sighed the old man; "you talk like a sage, but you look like an angel. He will not give you up so easily; but, dear child, you shall have no influence from us either way. Follow your own true heart."

Will was coldly received that night, and Jean's pale face lighted with no sweet smile when she saw him. He suspected the senator. Away back in his childhood his mother had disliked Brooks, and he had never outgrown his childish hate. Instead of bearing the coldness and breaking his heart because Jean would not speak kindly to him, he went straight to the stone mansion in the morning and demanded an interview with Mr. McClure. He passed Jean and the senator riding as he went along, receiving a cool bow from both. Mr. McClure and he were mutually nervous at the interview.

"Will you sit down, sir?" said Mr. McClure.

"No," said Will; "I only came to your house to ask you a question; I am honest; I do not deceive. I came here last night; every one was cold to me; Miss McClure hardly looked at me. What have I

done?" he went on piteously. "I worship the ground she walks on. I would lay down my life for her."

"I do not understand you," said McClure, stiffly.

"What has Senator Brooks told you?" pleaded the lad. "There is something; you have been kind to me. She was glad to see me once."

"Only that you are engaged to the daughter of your father's partner in New York," said McClure with much severity. "I am an old fashioned man, Mr. Curtis; I never loved, or flirted, as you call it, with but one woman, and she is my wife. I am honorable, sir; I expect honor in others. Jean is true-hearted; she would scorn you for treating a woman you are to marry so lightly as you are doing now."

"It is all a lie!" cried Will, hotly. "Mr. McClure, listen to me. My father's partner, John Whitney, has a daughter; she is two years older than I. She is a society girl all affectation and airs. I never liked her, nor do I think she cares for me. Our fathers want the match—both think it will make their partnership more binding. She will marry me for money, she has no heart; no love for anybody. I graduated from college last summer—I would not go home on her account. I went to Weymouth; I saw your daughter there and I loved her. She was so different from other women I had known. I went to that quaint old house; I saw Miss Franklin; she was a lady like my dead mother. Oh, sir, I have lived in shams and shows so long that it brought me back to my mother. Do you wonder that last

summer was the happiest in my life? I could not go back to New York; it almost killed me; I pleaded to my father to let me go to my dear mother's people in Boston. They have no intercourse with him, for he treated my mother badly. He said he would do all in his power to hurt me. He was my father after all, so I did not go. Then I pleaded that he should let me come West for a short time to visit the scenes of my childhood, and see my mother's grave. At last he consented; I came here to care for my mother's neglected grave; but mostly to see the woman I loved. I am poor, dependent on my father's bounty, hating that I take; yet I dared to love her! I cannot understand it, I do not; I only know I will work to be worthy of her. I am only twenty-two. I have my brains, my strength, and I have perseverance. Sir, you speak of honor; I have never told Jean I loved her. I have never tried to win her love. I have treated her as a sister, as an angel far above me. You have heard me! Make me right with her, tell her I am not engaged, how could I be, loving her, and I will go away, I will never see her again."

"I like you, Will Curtis; I believe you," said McClure heartily. "If you can win Jean you may have her. I was young myself once. Biddy an' me married with fifty cents in our cash box an' we've never had a word in our forty years of married life. Young love is best. I believe Jean half likes ye. If I was a young man now," he said, slyly, "I

wouldn't be long in finding out." He went to the door. Some one was coming through the hall.

"Come here, Jean," he said, drawing her into the library. "Here is a young man we must apologize to; we have been mistaken about him. He's an honest lad, if he doesn't look it now, but rather as if he had done something he was ashamed of. You make my apologies, dear," and he vanished, shutting the door.

CHAPTER XIII

A REVELATION

"There is no necessity for apology," said Will, stiffly. "Mr. McClure was deceived, that is all."

"I believed it, too," said Jean, penitently.

"You must have thought me a cad. I think women are strange. I worshiped you, I followed you like a dog; and then you believed I was in love with another woman! I can't understand your sex."

"You do not know us well enough," said Jean, going up to him, holding out her little hand in its tan riding gauntlet. "Will you forgive me, let us be the good friends we were?"

He took her hand and his ill humor vanished. He looked into her lovely, pleading face as he said with a break in his voice:

"We can never be friends again, Miss McClure."

"I do not understand you," she cried, trying to draw her hand away; "you are wrong and cruel to make so much of a trifle."

"There can never be friendship on my part again," he went on hurriedly—"never again. I cannot hide my feeling for you. Can't you see, Jean, I love you? that I love you not as a friend, but as a lover.

Jean, will you look at me? Are you angry? Why do you turn away? Don't you care for me? Is it the senator? Do you love him?"

"I hate him," said Jean.

"So do I; there is a bond between us. Oh, Jean, do look at me; why won't you answer?"

Jean snatched her hand away, ran to the sofa and buried her burning face in the crimson cushion. He looked ruefully at the golden head, the pretty, slight figure in the blue riding habit. He did not know what to do. He went over to the sofa.

"Am I hateful to you?"

"No," from the depths of the cushion.

He took hope from this, and knelt down beside her.

"Shall I leave you?"

No answer this time. He waited impatiently; after a pause he saw the golden head rise; two big tears were in the violet eyes, but a lovely smile was on the pretty mouth. Two soft arms went around his neck, and the rose-petal cheek was laid close to his. That was Jean; she was too happy for words. He somehow lost all awe of her; how simple it all was! It was the most natural thing in the world that he should kneel at her feet, and hold her fast and kiss her.

> "Yet dearer than my deathless soul
> I still would love my Jean."

"I can say that now," he whispered. "I loved you from the first day I saw you in church."

"I liked you," said Jean, shyly; "for, now don't laugh, you know the painting of General Franklin? Well, you looked just like him. I always was in love with that picture, and used to think how brave he was and all. Then you fell overboard that day, I felt so scared. But I think I knew I more than liked you when you went away that night, and—and—"

"And kissed your hand," he laughed. "How scared I was. I thought I had mortally offended you, then the next day I saw you visiting with the senator. I could have killed him."

They talked on, comparing their innocent hopes and fears, while the jolly old sun crept in the blind, touched Jean's golden hair, and seemed to rejoice with a yellow light at the pretty picture. By and by a gentle knock came to the door, Will assumed a dignified attitude on a distant chair while Jean's blushes chased each other faster and faster.

"It's only me," said Biddy, beaming on them. "Lunch is ready; you take Mr. Curtis, to the dining-room. Your father and I are through, we were tired waiting for you."

"Dear mother," Jean stammered, hiding her blushing face on that matronly bosom.

"Indeed, I'd not wished a better son-in-law. It's beautiful in you young folks. I suspected it, and now, Mr. Curtis—but it's Will now; you're going to be our boy, too—you make my Jean happy, that's

all McClure and I ask. Sure, I was breaking my heart that the senator might take her off, him old enough to be her father; but then a senator's a great man."

"Will can be one some day," said Jean, proudly. "You know, mother, you love him, too. You liked him from the first."

"Indeed, I did. Those honest eyes of his and his manly ways would win him liking anywhere. The impudent young feller," she finished, as Will gave her a hearty kiss.

The senator was forgotten for a time. They all caught Jean's happiness, and were secretly delighted with her choice. To honest, good people, there is something rarely sweet in the love of young hearts, and there is something unnatural in the marriage of a young girl to a man nearly thrice her age.

McClure, with some uncomfortable apologies, told the senator his cause was hopeless, and the senator accepted it with resignation. He went to Denver to the hotel, for the happiness of the young lovers was torture to him. How happy Jean was! Such rides she had, such walks, such songs, with Will to turn the leaves, such sweet hours in the beautiful parlors, such dreams of him, such realization of her dreams! Her nature craved love and kindness; caresses were as natural to her as loving words. She was a creature to be loved, tender as a sensitive plant.

One day, Will, whose presents were of a singu-

lar character, brought her a setter dog of a silky brown color, with beautiful yellow eyes, and marvelously intelligent.

"Dick's his name," said Will, "after a chum of mine. "I've had him eight months. "He's the most affectionate animal; I know you'll like him." Of course Jean went into raptures over him. She added him to her pets, two canaries and a parrot, all Will's gifts and cherished him the most. Dick was a wise dog. His quarters were more comfortable at the McClure house than being tied up in a shed and being taken out occasionally for exercise. Then his new owner petted him twenty times a day, and fed him with French candy, attention his master had entirely neglected. Where Jean was, Dick was; the plush furniture was none too good for him, and he slept at the side of his mistress' bed.

McClure laughed at Jean's menagerie, saying he would have to build another house for them; but he was a great admirer of Will, satisfied with all he did. Miss Franklin, who had a romantic corner in her heart—as all good old maids have—was delighted with Jean's choice. The senator was a fine gentleman, with wealth and position; but had he been the accepted lover, Jean would not have been child-like, happy Jean.

She would have tried to grow to his older ways, his coldness and dignity, and something would have been lost from the girl's sweet life.

The senator made preparations to return to New

York. He made up his mind often to write to Henry Curtis of Will's engagement; then he reasoned over it. Curtis would not be apt to refuse his consent if Will were determined on marriage with Jean, who after all, was an heiress.

The senator was nettled at the bare thought of her. He had not cared for her money; he loved her. She was beautiful, she would be the rage in Washington, she would add lustre to his name; then, more tormenting than all else in his disappointment, was the remembrance of her pretty ways, the glance of her dark eyes, the touch of her soft hand, the music of her voice. It seemed possible once he might possess her; but this boy had defeated him, had won the prize, a mere boy, with neither money nor position, an unmannerly cub, the senator thought bitterly. There were hundreds of women he might have married, it was fate he loved the one denied him. He was wasting time, gaining nothing, and posing in Denver as a rejected lover, while the two young people were riding every day. He never went out but he saw them. He never went to McClure's but they were together. He could not bear it. The night he made up his mind to return, the bell boy came to his room in the hotel. This bell boy was a small freckled youth, with a preternaturally shrewd and knowing look. Under his faint, thin hair was a Machiavellian brain. He eyed the great man passively and indifferently.

"What do you want, boy?" asked the great man.

"Lady in palor; wants ter see yer; priwate interview; no keerd, she sed."

There was a knowing look in the freckled boy's eye and a contraction of the eyelid; but he reflected he might lose his place, so he cast both his eyes down. "Did she say anything else—give any name?"

"Told me ter say 'twas important, that's all."

"Show her up," said the senator, with some anxiety. He thought it might be some woman with a grievance or a demand for help, she must be a very bold beggar to come in this way. A faint hope crossed his mind there might be trouble at Highland and Mrs. McClure had come to consult him; but it was after ten, and it would have been a strange proceeding.

He went into his private parlor, where the bell-boy ushered in a lady, all in black, with a long crape veil over her face. The boy, with the air of a partner in the mystery, went out shutting the door softly.

'Wonder now," he said to himself as he ambled down the hall with the stiffness of an ancient tortoise, "if she's got a rewolver. She looks like them that shoots and hits, too."

"You wished to see me, madam?" said the senator politely. "Are you sure I am the person?"

The stranger nodded, sitting down by the table. Then she raised her veil, showing him a face that had been handsome once, but the dark eyes were haggard, deep wrinkles in the forehead and the black hair streaked with gray.

"You do not recognize me?" she said bitterly.

He looked at her aghast, as he muttered like a man in a dream, "Rose McCord!"

"Yes, Rose McCord, a worn and faded woman, gray and haggard while you, the elder, are better looking than ever before. I recognized you the first day you came to McClure's. I knew then that Senator Brooks was the Tom Brooks of Rocky Creek."

"Why had you not told me you were here?" said the senator, suavely. "I would like to have seen you for old acquaintance sake." He drew a chair near her, assuming a friendly air.

"I do not think you would have seen me," she answered, coldly, "I know you would not. I waited till my plans matured, then I sought you out."

"I thought you came in remembrance of our old friendship," he said, pleasantly.

"You dwell on that. It is hateful to me," she said swiftly, with an angry scowl. "Friendship, when you swore you loved me; you would marry me! Then, when you made your strike, you slunk off like a coward and a sneak! Bah! don't speak; it is of no use."

"But it is of use, Rose," he said pleasantly, taking her hand. "I had to go. The circumstances were such that Curtis and I had to go away. We feared the papers might take up the old story of the Johnsons and make trouble for us."

"Did that prevent your writing to me?" asked Rose sadly.

"I drifted out into the world, Rose; I made more money. I had ambition; the years have gone by, the past is almost dead to me; men change with prosperity."

"I know that," Rose paced restlesly up and down the room. There was some terrible struggle going on in her mind, some great problem to be solved. She had not waited all these years for revenge to play her cards badly now; yet she was unnerved and excited, for she loved the man still. His friendliness, his courtesy, made her waver. What if he cared for her yet?

"I saw you with McClure's adopted daughter," she said, calmly, stopping and facing him. "Report says she jilted you."

"Why make your visit hateful to me?" Brooks said sternly. "Did you come to taunt me?"

"Far from it," Rose cried; "I want to help you. Despise me if you will, I can't take back what I gave; I love you yet and I hate myself. God, how I have suffered! and you sit there as far away from me as if the ocean were between us. Don't try to talk to me. You are false and dishonest. I do not —will not, believe you. I came to talk to you. Tell me, is this Will Curtis, Henry Curtis' son?"

"Yes."

"Do you hate him, the boy who defeated you, who laughs at you in the flush of his joy, with his young sweetheart, too?

"What do you want me to say?" sneered the senator. "You talk like a mad woman."

"Do I?" she hissed. "Yet I have in my hand the power to break off those young lover's happiness, to send them from each other with bitter hate and loathing."

"What do you know?" said Brooks, hoarsely. "You were never given to idle talk. Rose, if there is any good reason, tell me, and I will do anything for you."

"You will not marry the girl?"

He hesitated.

"Listen," said Rose, imperiously. "Years ago, when you and Curtis hung those Johnsons, I was silent; when you took their land, I was silent; when you made your millions, I never said a word. All these years I have held my peace. Hate me if you will, turn from me in loathing, yet you shall know what I have given you. You shall know the money that made your fortune and honor was mine. What I sacrificed in my love for you—a love you spurned. You fled from me; you hid from me; you looked down on me. Fool! When you found that million, had I spoken one word, you would have dangled from a tree like those Johnsons. This was my revenge, it was a pleasant one. I let you go, I let you have the money, I bear your desertion that some day I could tell you of this. I and no other, knew where the child was, and who had it, and I went to look after it. You thought you could deceive me!"

"What do you mean by this rigmarole?" he pant-

ed. "How does this concern Jean McClure, or me? What right have you to talk of saving my life, giving me my money? You are insane. I will ring the bell and have you sent out of the hotel."

"Not that," said Rose calmly. "Hopeless as my love has been—hopeless perhaps my hate—but it shall touch you, it shall haunt you, do what you will, go where you will. You know that woman you hung? Do you remember her face?"

"The Johnson woman," he asked looking at Rose curiously, "a big dark creature."

"Yes, she had worked in the hay fields and out of doors; it had made her coarse and tanned. I lived in fine houses, with better fare, yet, Senator Brooks we were own sisters, the children of the same farmer parents, that woman and I; and I could have claimed the land you stole from the dead."

Brooks looked at her in reluctant admiration.

"I hid it from you!" went on Rose steadily, "I dreaded you would hate me; I see you shudder now! If you will never care for me you shall never love her. You shall know all—nothing shall stop me now!"

"Tell me all, then," said Brooks, harshly. "Quick —or I will not believe you; you are not that woman's sister. It is a lie!"

"Would you have me to go to law to prove it? Would you have the story dragged into the courts? Shall I bring Johnson's child up for a witness, and tell what you did to her, and why you hung her par-

ents? I fancy then Senator Brooks would be in a bad way. The shame, the disgrace of it, would drive him out into the world a friendless wanderer as he was when he crossed the plains in '59?"

The truth of what she said struck the man. He had dreaded that child in an unconscious way all the years. He felt she would rise to torment him. He was superstitious; he believed there would come a day of reckoning. Yet as the years went on, he became indifferent to it. She must be dead, or so far away no chance could ever tell her the story.

"Johnson's child," he repeated. "Is she alive; does she know?"

"You thought you had hid her from me," said Rose, triumphantly. "You had no idea I was as shrewd as you. I found her at the home those Greens kept. She was taken from them, and I lost track of her. But I found her again after many years, and I know where she is to-day."

"Does she know?" Brooks asked quietly.

"No; she does not, she has never heard the story. What will you do for me if she never does know?"

"I will give you money," he said coldly. "I have power and influence. You cannot fight me. It is better to make terms. So many years have gone the child's claim to the mine is valueless. It would never be established; it is as useless as your own."

"You would give me money." Rose repeated; "you think I would take back what I gave you. Tom," she cried wildly, clinging to his arm with passion-

ate force, struggling with her sobs, "for heaven's sake hear me, have mercy on me. I have loved you for twenty years. I have suffered for you; I have given you fortune and fame; I have waited in torture, in hope that was only cruel disappointment. I believe you still; as I will forget everything in the past. Make me your wife—listen, do not draw away. I have studied, worked night and day! I am accomplished, like ladies you know in the world; I am not old, I am not ugly; happiness would make me young again. See, see; I take this hideous bonnet off, I look better now. I am not sad. Tom, I will be a good wife—a true wife. I will work for you, worship you, live only for you. For heaven's sake, hear me—"

He tore his arm away and pushed her from him. She clung to his knees and groveled at his feet, still pleading with broken words, with hot tears.

"Hush! I will not listen to you!" he said, striving to free himself. "I would not marry you if you were the only woman in the world. Let me go. You are crazy; I knew it from the first; I will have you arrested. Will you never be still? Do you think I would stoop to you, stoop to marry Miss Wallace's maid?"

Rose started as from a trance; she staggered to her feet, pushing the disheveled hair from her face.

"You call me that; you taunt me! You shall know. If you despise me, you shall her! You marry the golden-haired beauty, old McClure's daughter? You

"YOU CALL ME THAT! YOU TAUNT ME!"—P. 180.

think you will yet succeed! I will let you marry her and then tell you— no, no, not that; you shall never marry! Listen!" she hissed, "Where is Johnson's child—where is the child of the man and woman you murdered? The child of the hag that lay drunk on the floor, and let Mary MacDonald freeze to death—the child of the man whose land you stole? You want to find her—you would buy her off—you think she is a low creature! Bah, you will break your heart for her! You are doing so now. You have toadied to her, followed her like a dog; you have danced at her beck and call. Who is Johnson's child? Go to McClures' house; ask him where he got that girl. Ask him who her parents were; he will not know; ask his laundress, old Mrs. Green—ask me who have followed her all these years, we will tell you where the Johnson child is—"

"Who—where?" panted Brooks, the veins swelling on his forehead. "Where is she? Who is she? Tell me, or I will have you dragged to jail as a thief!"

"You threaten? I want you to feel your happiness, taste the cup you have offered me."

"Where is that child?" he repeated.

Rose McCord caught up her bonnet and cape. She passed him with a mocking laugh.

"Make your terms with me, Sir Senator, or you shall never know."

He caught her by the arm.

"Rose, tell me," he pleaded. "Tell me. I can

not bear this; I will do anything for you, I will, I swear it! Only give me my revenge on them. On those people who have laughed at me, the girl who scorned me, the man who defeated me! I will marry you. I swear it!"

"What!" cried Rose. "You will? You do not care for her? You will care for me?"

"I swear I will marry you if you tell me the truth. I must, I will know."

"They will fight you tooth and nail. They will not believe it," said Rose swiftly; "but I have the proofs. I only know who the child is. You dare not guess it. Come to me to-morrow night. I will show you the proofs. Now I must go."

"Tell me first, I cannot endure this; tell me or I will follow you! I will dog your steps till I know. I must know. Is it——" He could not voice his suspicion. It was too horrible, too revolting. A picture of that lonely gulch and the two ghastly bodies swinging to and fro in the wind rose up before him. All the terrible history of a night of crime came to him. Had fate punished him in this way, fooled him with hope and joy, tortured him with disappointment, and then with fearful malice driven a dagger through his heart?

"You dare not think it, you dare not breathe it: you are sick—heart sick," hissed Rose McCord. "You would not have it so. You would tear a memory from your heart; but something tells you, something stronger than my voice, or my proofs.

It is an accusing remembrance you know that you have loved and would have married the daughter of that murdered man—Jean McClure!"

She slammed the door behind her but Brooks neither heard nor heeded.

"Oh my God!" he cried. "Time has wrought its own punishment, the worst revenge of all, for I love her, I love her!"

CHAPTER XIV

A HASTY JOURNEY WEST

Jean in her new happiness had neglected her friend and neighbor, Miss Wallace; but one afternoon, a few days after Rose McCord's visit to the Senator, she went over to the old house. Well-meaning people had considered it their duty to tell Mrs. McClure Miss Wallace's history. Of course, then, if she would go there and take her young daughter, too, it was her own affair. Mrs. Collins told her the facts from her knowledge that day of the dinner party. Mrs. Collins was a great lady now, living in a fine house on Capitol Hill, driving in a coupé, and wearing so many diamonds that she rivalled a jeweler's display window.

Mrs. McClure listened politely, but paid no heed. She did not believe the stories; she felt in her kind heart there was some mystery, and her tender pity and sympathy went out to lonely Virginia Wallace. If she loved Jean, Jean should go there and make her sad life brighter.

Miss Wallace was like a beautiful picture to Jean. She was always sad yet lovely in voice and face, and sweet and generous. Jean knew her charities;

she had shared in them, and the two visited the poor together. Jean had seen many a suffering face light up with joy and peace when Miss Wallace came to the bedside. Romantic and soft-hearted, as all sweet girls are, she tried in her affectionate way to make Miss Wallace happier.

"You have deserted me a long, long time," said Miss Wallace resting her thin hand on the golden head. Jean had drawn a low stool up to the chair by the window, and was sitting at Miss Wallace's feet, while Dick lay beside her, feeling it his duty to be a faithful attendant. "I think, though, you are not to blame; some one else takes all your time. Dick could tell who, for he seems always to make a silent third."

Jean blushed, and she laughed.

"You know it without my telling; you have guessed something."

"I would be a blind old woman if I had not," said Miss Wallace, tenderly; "I used to fear it would be the senator, but I saw the young man come; I knew whom he loved, pretty soon I knew who loved him. Your father and mother were willing, were they not?" she went on with a strange sadness in her beautiful eyes; "you had no opposition?"

"No, indeed; Father McClure, I know, liked Will the best, and so did mother and Miss Franklin. You never knew how I met Will?" Jean told her love story then, Miss Wallace listening with sympathetic interest.

"And you will be married soon?" she asked eagerly.

"I do not know," said Jean. "It rests with father; Will and I are so young we can wait; then I fear his father will object, and—"

"Do not let that break your heart. Do not let him separate you," cried Miss Wallace bitterly. "Cling to your lover; do not let anything, any one mar your happiness. Jean, Jean, all my sad life I owe to a father's cruelty. I should not say it, for he is dead—they are all dead," she moaned pacing the floor. "You have never seen me like this; you look frightened, Jean. Ah, your story, your young lover, your happiness brings back the buried past, I have locked in my breast for twenty years."

"Dear Miss Wallace," said Jean, her eyes wet, too, "I felt there was something in your life like that. If I could only comfort you. Ah, I pray it will not happen to me; but sometimes I feel so strangely, such presentiments! It seems as if I were too happy, then I dream of a terrible past, of the days before the McClures took me; such an unhappy child I was. I told you of that dreadful home, those people, how I stole and fought, and they called me an imp of Satan. I look at myself in the glass and I wonder if I can be the same sad, miserable little child. When Will tells me how much he loves me and all the sweet praises he gives me, I feel like telling him the story of my life then; but I can not; I fear that he will love me

less; then," she said with a shudder, "I seem to go away, away, back, to a wild confused dream—Ah, if I knew whether it were dream or reality! I see a child's face, thin and haggard—a horrible man and an awful mob. Oh, I cannot speak of it, think of it!" cried Jean, bursting into wild tears.

Then Miss Wallace petted and comforted her, forgetting her own sorrows.

"Now, Jean," she said, "we will not let such topics ever come up again. Why you are all in white like a bride; how pretty that soft cashmere and swan's-down is—like a snow-flake. You always wear such dainty gowns—pinks or blues or white. You never wear black. I hope you never will. All you need with that pretty dress is this—" she took from an ivory, satin-lined case a necklace of beautiful pearls, and put it around the girl's neck.

"Oh, I never could take them," cried Jean. "They are priceless.

"They were my mother's—I have never worn them," said Miss Wallace, with a shiver." I could not, but you can wear them. She was fair and sweet, and had golden hair like yours. You remember the picture of her in the green brocade down stairs? She has these pearls twined in her hair. They say pearls are tears—I do not believe it—I would not give you tears. Do not take them off. You will not refuse a sad, lonely woman this pleasure. Who will get my things when I am gone? I do not know; but while I live they shall give me

happiness and make others happy. See, Jean, here comes your young lover; let him see how pretty you look."

Jean called Will over and introduced him. They went into the quaint parlor, where Jean sang for them her father's favorite song. Then old Sam announced tea, they sent word over to Mrs. McClure and stayed with Miss Wallace. Will was almost jealous, Jean loved the lady so; but he fell in love with her himself, after Jean's fashion, and it was ten o'clock before they knew it.

"Will," whispered Jean, as they walked home across the lawn, "I do think I am the happiest girl in the world, everybody is so kind and everybody seems to love me."

"As if they could help it, Jean," said Will, making his words emphatic by expected tokens of esteem.

"Jean, the senator has witten me a note," said old McClure anxiously, as he kissed her good-night. "He wants an interview with you the night after to-morrow. He wants you to be at home, as it is important. What on earth can he mean?"

"Only to bid me good-bye," Jean replied, carelessly. "He might have spared himself, for, father mine, you will not believe your Jean is so ugly and savage, but, really, I do—do hate the senator?"

"Fie, Jean—hate. That is a strong word for a lady."

"There is no other name that I have for my feel-

ing for him," said Jean, firmly, "unless I say distrust and dread."

The night that Rose McCord told him the story of Jean's parentage, the Senator sent the following note to New York:

DEAR CURTIS:—Contrary to your expectations I have been unable to check your son. Will is engaged to McClure's adopted daughter. The McClures favor it. Of course my telling McClure that Will was engaged to Whitney's daughter was of no avail. He is anxious to get the girl married. I have found out why. He wants her off his hands before the world finds out who she is. She is Johnson's daughter, the child we found in the log cabin. Time brings strange retribution. You would hardly in view of the past, wish to call her your daughter-in-law. I leave the facts with you. I reiterate, I can do nothing. Regards to all. BROOKS.

The letter went its way, and was delivered by the postman at a fine house in a fashionable locality in New York. The master of the house did not come home until late; then he went to his wife's room. They were going to a party that night, and she was already attired in a brocade and priceless lace, with (as she often told her friends) ninety thousand dollars worth of diamonds on." She was a large, fair woman, plump to prettiness, with babyish blue eyes, rosebud mouth, and complexion that defied the ravages of time, a soft pink and white needing neither rouge or powder. She was consid-

ered one of the handsomest women in New York, and had had her portrait painted till she must have been vain if she had never known vanity. She had posed in tableaux, as some famous beauty, and her photographs were eagerly sought. She was, however, with all her wealth and beauty, the kindest woman in the world, lavish and generous to a fault and a good mother. In her dressing-room now, at a time when other women would have been annoyed and distracted, she had all her family. Maud, a sallow, dark girl, was looking at her mother's jewels, Bertha and Belle, the blonde twins, were trying her gloves on their skinny hands, and young Henry Curtis, of four years, ate chocolate creams out of a silver bon-bon box on the table, and was a fine mess of stickiness and sweetness.

"I never did see sich young 'uns," said Mrs. Curtis good humoredly to her French maid; "Nina, do send 'em out; I'll never git fixed in the world. For pity's sake, Henry, do put down that candy; you'll be sick."

"Wun't," said Henry, composedly, just then he heard his father's step, so he slid off the table and out of the room, carrying a load of candy. The twins followed, and Maud, with an ill-natured air, dropping the jewelry on the table, slowly left the room.

"Monsieur makes the children behave!" said the maid, with an air of relief.

"They're scared of him. I wish they was of me,"

smiled Madam. "Ah, Henry, I was afraid you was goin' to be late," as a dark gentleman, elegant in dress and appearance, came in. "There is a Denver letter for you; I brought it up."

"You may go, Nina," said Curtis, taking up the letter. He looked at the envelope with a strange smile.

Time had dealt gently with Henry Curtis. He was a little stouter, a little grayer, that was all; but his evil smile was the same, though it was seldom seen nowadays. He was a deacon in a fashionable church, member of fashionable clubs, had a fashionable wife, gave elegant parties and was liked in society. He had a family of nice children, a fine home, and he loved his wife still.

"Senator Brooks," he repeated. "He owes it all to me; he was ignorant enough once."

"He's an illegant gentleman now," said Mrs. Curtis.

"Ellegant, Sarah," corrected her husband composedly, cutting open the envelope. "You had better drop that word from your vocabulary; it seems too much for you, though you're beautiful enough to be forgiven mistakes."

"Do you like my dress?"

"Lovely," he said, opening the letter. He read it through twice. His wife watched his face anxiously. She saw a shade almost of horror creep over it. He held the letter to her. "Is there any brandy here?" he asked, hoarsely.

She pointed to the closet. He drank a large glassful, wet his handkerchief in the cologne on the bureau, and buried his face in it.

"God! how sick I am," he muttered. "Isn't it horrible? Those people's child—my son!"

"What shall we do?" asked his wife, trembling. "Why, Henry, you're sick; I never saw you so pale, 'cept that day we struck it rich in the Gulch. How can we help it?"

"Help it! Will shall never marry her," cried Curtis fiercely. "There is no party for us to-night, Sal. We'll start for Denver. The newspaper—is there any train? No, not till morning. Well, pack up your things, take off your fine dress; we'll start at six in the morning, and you shall go with me. I could not bear to go back there alone."

"Much as I hate the place, I'd go back sooner than you should go alone," said his wife lovingly, "and—and, Henry there can't be no one there that knowed me in the old days."

He understood, and pitied her; yet, after all, whose past was the worst to face, his or hers? He hated his son for the trouble and annoyance he had brought on him, saying under his breath he would find out to his cost if he dared to disobey.

Early in the morning they started. In four days they were in Denver. Here they registered under an assumed name at a hotel. Curtis felt his son would have fled had he known of his coming. Here he found out McClure's adopted daughter was ignorant

of her parentage and all the horrible story of Desperation gulch. The laundress at McClure's was the Mrs. Green of the home where Brooks had brought the child.

"It's a pity," said Curtis, when the Senator told him all, "that we hadn't got rid of her that day."

Just then Mrs. Curtis joined them at the window and they saw coming up the street a fine, thoroughbred bay horse and his rider, a pretty girl in a blue habit carrying herself proudly, managing her horse with courage and skill. A colored groom followed her and a brown dog trotted along beside the horse.

"What a sweet girl, so English! Who is she?" said Mrs. Curtis, enthusiastically.

"That," answered the senator, "is the child of the Johnsons of Desperation Gulch, Jean McClure."

"What a metamorphosis!" Curtis exclaimed, and they were all silent, as the girl rode by.

This was in the morning of the day the senator had written he would like an interview with Miss McClure. In the afternoon after the two gentlemen had gone, Mrs. Curtis ordered a carriage and drove away in great trepidation. When she was some distant from the hotel she ordered the driver to drive to the house of Alexander McClure, at Highland, and when there she asked for Miss Jean. She had a card, she would detain the lady but a few minutes. Jean was at home and answered the summons. She came shyly into the grand parlor, so sweet and girlish. Mrs. Curtis felt her courage fail. Yet

after all, she had come on an errand of mercy. She hoped to break up the match with Will, then the pretty girl need never know the disgrace of her parents. Sal's heart was the kindest; she dared her husband's wrath—for the first time in her life she deceived him—all to protect from a dreadful sorrow a girl she did not know and had no reason to care for.

"Miss McClure," said Sal, "I know you by sight. I am Mrs. Henry Curtis, Will's step mother."

Jean started with a little cry.

"Now please don't make no scene," said the visitor, putting out a pretty gloved hand. "Sit down on the sofa 'side of me; I've the best feelins in the world towards you. I ran off to-day from my husband and the senator just to spare you, to help you."

"To help me?" stammered Jean, sinking on the sofa beside the lady who was gorgeous in a fawn-colored silk, resplendent with diamonds, a gaudy, vulgar woman, with a kind face.

"I daren't tell but a little," said Sal hurriedly, "dear me how white you are. You don't faint and make them all come in an' find me here."

"No, no," cried Jean; "you startled me, that was all. I will be quiet. See, I am calmer now. His father is here then?"

"Yes, at the hotel; him an' the senator was comin' to-night. I got the start on 'em. I see you this mornin'. You looked so pretty an' good. I

was heart-sick at what they might do—an' all—but dear me, I'm wanderin' way off, an' time so precious. You're engaged to our Will, Miss McClure?"

"Yes," said Jean faintly.

"You love him—there, I knowed you did. Miss Whitney—belle of New York, and awful fashionable—was just dyin' for him. Of course, he'd have married her but for you,—well, there. I don't blame Will a mite; but it will never do, his father will never consent. It ain't because of ennythin' you done, but what happened long ago, and wasn't your fault at all."

"What do you mean?" cried Jean—"something that happened long ago? Is it about my childhood, my people? Does your husband know?"

"He knows all about you; it's a horrible story. He would rather see Will in his coffin than married to you."

"In his coffin," repeated Jean. "Ah, Mrs. Curtis, does—does Mr. McClure know, and his dear wife whom I call mother?"

"Of course they does," went on the woman impetuously; "he's just dying to have you well married off 'fore the world finds it out. S'ciety is awful perticuler; it has to be, you know; and it would ruin Will's prospects in life. It is such an awful thing!"

"For heaven's sake, tell me," cried Jean, sinking on her knees beside Mrs. Curtis, "tell me what it is! How can I bear it? Some shame, disgrace of

my own parents, and I ignorant all others knowing, and they too—and they would wish me married! They despise me, and Will—does he know?"

"Of course not," said Mrs. Curtis, almost brutal in her effort to help the girl; "he would not want to marry you if he did; he'd—he'd loathe you."

"Loathe me?" gasped Jean. "Ah, you cannot mean that."

"I do, I do," sobbed Mrs. Curtis, the tears running down her cheeks. "You poor, poor child! He never would marry you. Tell him you won't have him; write him a note, or something—then he will go away and won't see you again, and Henry—Mr. Curtis, I mean—will go back home; and me and the senator, too, who feels awful about it."

"Oh, he knows, too," said Jean, suspiciously.

"Yes; but only lately, an' he's not to blame like Henry, an' it was so dreadful. Oh, dear," putting out a tiny jeweled watch, "it is five o'clock. I must go back; they will miss me. Henry will hunt me up. He will never forgive me. I pray you, Miss McClure—I'd beg you to free Will, an' I swear to you, whatever happens, he shan't know."

"You will never tell him?" said Jean, a new light in her eyes. "You will not let him despise me?"

"I swear it."

"Then I will write anything, do anything," said Jean. "Here is my desk; now tell me what to say."

"I don't know; indeed, I don't," went on Mrs. Curtis distractedly. "Tell him you like somebody else."

"He knows I do not."

"Tell him then he is poor; that you find you want money; something like that."

Jean wrote a few moments. "Will this do?" she said calmly reading the note.

DEAR FRIEND:—Do not be angry but I cannot marry you. I hear your father will disinherit you. I would not wish you to be a burden on my foster parents nor do I wish to be poor and wretched in the poverty we would have to bear. You will understand this is final. JEAN MCCLURE.

"It reads like a book. Give it to me," said Mrs. Curtis, "I'll leave it where he boards. Address the envelope. That's right; you're a brave girl. I like you, an' I hope you'll git over it soon. These things never kills. Good bye."

She kissed Jean's cheek, hurrying out. Jean heard the hall door slam and the carriage roll away. She sat in a dull, unconscious state, her head on her outstretched arms. By and by soft footsteps pattered over the carpet and a cold nose touched her face.

"Dicky, Dicky!" she cried, bursting into bitter tears. "You are all that's left me. You are the only one who won't despise me when they know. Oh my heart will break!"

She slipped down to the floor beside the dog hiding her face in his silky coat. The afternoon faded into the night that would bring her the end of her happy girlhood.

CHAPTER XV

JEAN HEARS HER HISTORY

"Will you do something for my sake?" said Mrs. Curtis, on the night of her visit to Jean McClure. "It is seldom I ever like a stranger, but I have taken a fancy to that pretty girl. Put off the visit to Jean McClure till you have seen Will."

The worthy creature hoped Will would take Jean's note as final, and be willing to give her up. The senator, always willing to oblige, thought it would be a good plan to put off the visit until another night; he would send a servant over to tell Mr. McClure he would not keep the engagement. The senator dreaded the interview; yet he knew that it was his only chance. He was aware the McClures did not know who Jean's parents were, and he thought naturally it must make a difference when they found out. Will would turn from her, she would turn from Will, and he (the senator) would be the faithful friend. Just as they were debating this question there came rapid steps through the hall and a hurried knock at the door. The senator opened it, and to the surprise of all Will Curtis walked in. He stopped in astonishment at seeing his father and mother.

"I might have known you were here," he exclaimed, bitterly.

"You have caused us trouble and anxiety," said his father coldly. "You have forced us to make this journey to break off your engagement. We came here to prevent your marriage, to clear you from the snare those McClures laid for you."

"You were thoughtful," Will sneered. "Have you considered that I am past twenty-one, therefore you have no hold on me? I got a blotted, hurried note from her to-day. I knew she did not mean one word of it; the sentiments were repulsive to her. I thought Brooks had been trying to break our engagement because Jean would not have him; it was you, then."

"I have had no communication with Miss McClure at all," said his father; "but I will have. Even if I had overlooked the fact sir, that you were as good as engaged to Miss Whitney, I could not let this marriage take place. McClure knows why he wants the girl married soon. She may know, herself, but you shall know who she is, who her parents were; then you will understand why I will prevent this marriage to the extent of my ability."

"Do you think a fool story you and Brooks might invent would influence me?" said Will hotly.

"Well, McClure was willing and eager you should marry the girl," suggested the senator mildly.

"You are not concerned in this," cried Will. "Mind your own affairs. I can—"

"Will, Will!" said Mr. Curtis, hurriedly; "pray don't, pray be still; do not say things you'll be sorry for. We mean all this for your own good. It would ruin you to marry her."

"Hear my story," continued Henry Curtis. "Will, you have sense enough to judge for yourself. You will know then why this marriage is impossible—horrible—against all reason. Let me tell you who her parents were—"

"Never," cried Will. "I will not hear one word. Whatever her parents were, Jean is Jean—the purest, best of women; I will not listen to you; I will go to her father—we will be married to-night—I defy you, sir!"

"You are well fixed for marriage," said his father angrily; "a beggar, or a dependant on McClure's bounty. You may be marrying the girl to be supported."

"My own mother's father will help me," cried Will, "the father of the woman you killed, after you broke her heart, and dragged her down in your wanderings until she died. My grandfather will welcome me. I have not even a look of you; thank God I never cared for you."

"Had I hate for you," said Henry Curtis, steadily, "you should marry the girl; but you are my son; even if you turn against me, I cannot despise you."

"Hypocrite and trickster!" shouted Will. "I hold your threats as idle as your kindness. My grand-

father is a gentleman; I will talk to him, but I never will to you. I don't care what you say, what you do. Here is the last check you gave me; take it; send me no more; we are quits from this moment." The excited lad seized his hat. Mrs. Curtis ran to him.

"Oh, Will," she sobbed, "don't go to her; it will be her ruin. She does not know—it will break her heart—"

"Hush, Sal," interposed her husband, "let the mad fool go!"

Will dashed out.

"Follow him!" cried the senator hoarsely. "Quick, there's not a moment to lose!"

The two men rushed out, while the woman fell into a chair in a passion of helpless tears.

"What will you do?" whispered the senator, as their carriage whirled through the streets.

"Tell the whole story," hissed Curtis.

"For God's sake, leave me out, I cannot defend myself. I know not whether it be fate or retribution. I can not conquer it—it is my life—my only hope—I love Jean McClure!"

"Impossible," muttered Curtis. "I pity you; I'll keep your secret. Where is the place? There?"

Will had the start of them. He was on horseback, and he rode through the town like a madman. He dashed up to the house, and burst into the library where the family were sitting. He saw Jean pale and sad, in a low chair at McClure's

feet. The tears came into the lad's wild eyes.

"Mr. McClure," he cried hurriedly, "there is some vile scheme—my father—Brooks. They have tried to separate Jean and me. They made her write me a letter. She did not mean a word of it. She could not stoop so low. They've told me there is some story of her parents—they've trumped up a lie. I would not hear it—I will never believe it. What of it? Jean is mine; she loves me; I love her; what can all the world do to that? How can they separate us? You gave her to me; you shall not take her back."

Jean sprang up, pale and trembling, old McClure put his arm about her.

"Be brave, dear," he said fondly. "My bonnie Jean. Sik stories canna' wrang ye. Will, take her. She loves ye. She will not go to you? Jean, Jean," the old man went on brokenly. "What has come over you? Have they frightened you?"

"Oh, it will hurt him, disgrace him," sobbed Jean. "Send him away, father; they said it would mar his whole life!"

"They lie!" shouted Will, seizing her hands. "Jean, marry me now. Let him send for a minister. Then let my father come here or dare to speak your name!"

"What is the story? Do you know, Jean?" asked McClure, sternly.

"I do not; she—she would not tell me. No, no, Will; I must not, I cannot marry you. Oh, go

away; leave me with my dear father. But she said you knew, Father McClure, she said you knew and despised me!"

"A lie!" roared McClure, "whoever she was. Tell me who, Jean, I'll go to her. I'll drag the lie out of her; what damned villainy is this?"

"My own Jeannie," Mrs. McClure sobbed, "just let any one dare to talk to me of you. I'll tear their heart out.'

"Let them speak a word to me," chimed in Miss Franklin with the air of a tragedy queen; "let them dare, the slanderers!"

At that moment the hall door-bell rang, and a man's voice demanded to be shown in. The old butler refused, while McClure rushed into the hall.

"Go back, you devils!" he shouted. "Go back where you came from. Don't dare me in my own house or I can't keep my hands off ye; I was good at fighting once. I'm a match for both of ye."

"We will be heard," said Curtis. "Mr. McClure, you don't want this to go into the courts. My son shall know who the girl is, who her parents were. I tell you it is a crime, a horror for him to marry her. Look at the servants, the men oustide! For heaven's sake, don't make a scene. Listen to reason."

Jean pale but very calm came out in the hall.

"Father," she said gently, "they must come in. They shall say what they have to say. It is my right to hear them. Come in."

"I'll not hear them," said McClure.

"Nor me," cried Biddy. "The idea of 'em coming in—Jean, you shan't hear 'em."

"I beg you will hear it all," Jean pleaded. They were in the library. She closed the door and stood with her back against it, the dark oak a background for her still, white face. The tears of a few moments ago were gone—all the agitation—but her calm was more dreadful than a tempest.

Mr. McClure was beside his weeping wife on the sofa. Miss Franklin sat very stately, looking over the heads of the two visitors. Will stood by the fire-place.

"Sit down, please," said Jean, pointing to chairs. "I wonder Senator Brooks comes here; what right has he in an affair that concerns your son and me?"

Curtis turned and looked at the brave girl. For the first time she saw him face to face. She gave a little cry, and pushed her hand over her forehead gazing at him like a bird fascinated by a snake.

"Senator Brooks is witness of what I have to say," said Curtis shortly; then he turned to McClure. "I understood you knew this girl's parentage?"

"I did not nor don't want to know it," answered McClure stiffly.

"I am forced to believe you," went on Curtis. "Suppose we go back, then, to a time when you took a child called Jane from a place known as 'Paradise on Earth?'

"Ah, that place, that name!" murmured Jean. "Now I remember it. The name never would come to me."

"As you remember that," said Curtis contemptuously, "suppose you ring the bell for the laundress to come here. There may be some one else you will remember."

"I protest against this!" cried Will; "it is heartless and brutal!"

"Will, you are only adding to my torture," said Jean firmly. "Mr. Curtis has a right to introduce any witness he wishes. I would rather there were more proofs than his unsupported word."

Curtis winced; he already hated the girl in her defiant calmness. He would humble her yet.

When the old butler came, Jean sent him to call the laundress. There was silence till she came. She entered the room with a righteous air and a severely virtuous look—Mrs. Green, weazened and wrinkled, with beady, black eyes. She had on a black dress and an aggressive looking bonnet and was ready to depart the moment the interview was over. She had been well paid.

Jean stepped aside to allow the woman to enter; she looked at her curiously, then with a start of recognition.

"Who are you?" asked McClure.

"Mebbe yew don't know me," said Mrs. Green, sourly; "but your woman does, wot told me a false name, an' Jane here I'll be bound do."

"Be respectful, or I'll pitch you out of the window," cried Will.

"Them two gints'll purtect me, young whippersnapper," smirked Mrs. Green. "I relies on them."

"Will, do not interrupt her," said Jean taking her old place at the door. "I know you, Mrs. Green. You used to beat me, and you and a dreadful man used to chain poor old men and women in a bare, cold room, then so many children died, and you buried them in the yard. Your witness, Mr. Curtis, is worthy of you. Pray proceed."

"She's a brave one," whispered McClure; "I thought she would wilt like a crushed flower, but she holds her head up like a bud just opened. She is a bud blooming into a rose, and a noble, beautiful one."

"'Tisn't nateral," mourned Biddy. "Her pretty eyes is so glossy, and there's such a rigid look on her face, oh dear, it'll kill her!"

"Mrs Mc.Clure," said Curtis, "is this the woman who kept the Home?"

"It is the old murderer!" cried Biddy; "and her in my house, too, like a viper!"

"Is she the woman Mr. McClure?" continued Curtis, calmly.

"You know she is," he said shortly.

"Well, then, tell your story—in few words, Mrs. Green, if you please," said Curtis, with his evil smile.

"One night in September, 1868, a man rode up to my place," said Mrs. Green deliberately; "he brought

this child—it was four years old—named Jane, he sed, 'n give me twenty dollars. I dunno the man. I never see him agin. We kept the brat four year, 'n she was a wicious one—tried ter kill me with a knife onct—"

"I wish she had," muttered Will, "or that you had been hung, as you deserved."

"Wicious, indeed," said Mrs. Green, sucking in her lips apparently unconscious of the interruption, "wicious, indeed; 'n lied 'n stole; I was glad to get rid of her. A woman called onct ter know 'bout her; that was all the notis as was took in four year. Then two critters come at night 'n wanted ter adopt a child. Give the name o' Rafferty, which was a lie. We was glad ter be red of Jane, 'n we let her go with 'em. They went off that night, tellin' us they was goin' East, but we arterwards found out their names was McClure, 'n they went up to Coyote Gulch."

"This is all you know about the child?" Curtis asked, hastily, for every vein in McClure's forehead was standing out.

"All, 'cept this," said Mrs. Green, handing Curtis a handkerchief. "This was around the child's hed when she come—there's a name wrote in the corner."

"Has she finished?" broke in McClure.

"Quite through, unless you would wish to question her," said Curtis.

"Here, John!" yelled McClure, rushing to the

hall. "Bundle this hag off the premises. If you ever see her again here have the police drag her to jail. She's an old thief and a liar—that Green woman who murdered all the folks in that home here."

Mrs. Green walked out calmly.

"Don't trouble yerself old McClure—Rafferty," she said, with an airy toss of her head. "Me trunks is gone yesterday,' 'n there's a hack outside for me, an' a perlice ordered by these gints to purtect me. Wish yer joy of yey gallus bird's brat."

The rest of her speech was lost, for Jean closed the door.

"I have called but three witnesses this evening," said Curtis, when McClure had panted back to his place. "I thought you would wish to avoid notoriety; but I have the names of several others to whom you can apply to-morrow. My other witness," he went on, looking at his watch, "will be here in a few moments; till she comes I will tell you a little story."

"We will see the witness first," said Jean coolly.

The senator looked at her then for the first time. How beautiful she was; the pallor of her face, the strange brilliancy of her eyes gave her an unearthly loveliness. He sighed involuntarily; there were iron hands clutching at his heart; his brain was on fire. The misery she suffered he suffered; added to this was a mad hope he might win her, and a sickening sense of the utter folly of that hope. His

fate depended on this story. A soft step sounded in the hall, and Rose McCord, calm and dignified, walked into the room.

"Miss Wallace's maid!" ejaculated Miss Franklin. Rose heard, her great black eyes flashed a look of hate, but she conquered her passion quickly as it came. She stood near Jean and the Senator saw the two together for the first time. How pure and delicate Jean was, like a lily, while Rose was coarse-featured and massive, a tropical plant poisonous as a rattlesnake.

"You are known by these people?" Curtis asked her. Rose bowed slightly.

"Miss Wallace will give you a good character?" An angry red flamed over Rose's face as she bowed again.

"Very well," went on Curtis. "Did you know a family of Johnsons who came here early in the sixties?"

"I did," said Rose quietly. "I met them often."

"Did you know a man named MacDonald who had a child Mary?"

"I knew him slightly; he was a grave-digger and drove the hearse used here in those days. The child I saw often, a pitiful little creature."

"Did the Johnsons have any children?"

"One, a girl, three years old when they came to Denver—called Jane."

Curtis looked at the McClures—at Jean. Their faces had not changed from an expression of curi-

osity and intentness. Evidently they did not know.

"You could, I suppose, bring persons who knew these Johnsons and their child?"

"A number," said Rose, looking with some wonder at the calm people who listened to her. "There were some men – wagon drivers—" (involuntarily as she said these words her eyes went to the senator, who blushed and looked away), "also some women now living in Denver."

"Did you see the child at Mrs. Green's?" said Curtis.

"I did once; I went there with some delicacies for the sick. I inquired for a child answering to the description of the Johnson's. I knew they were dead and I thought she might be there. She was; I saw her, I recognized her."

"I remember a dark lady in black who had bracelets on," said Jean quietly; "I had never seen them before; they made an impression on my mind."

"The child was eight years old when I saw her," Rose went on hurriedly. "I do not know what called my attention to her, or what made me remember the Johnsons; but I wanted to see if the child was alive; that was all."

"Does this young woman resemble the child Jane?" asked Curtis.

"Exactly; I remembered the eyes from the first time I saw her," said Rose impassively; "they were large, of a violet shade, with long, dark lashes, rather noticeable, I think."

"Did these Johnsons you knew take the child of MacDonald?" said Curtis. McClure started up looking at Rose excitedly.

"They did," she answered; "MacDonald gave her to them, and they went to a place twenty miles from Denver, called Desperation Gulch."

McClure went to the table and drank a glass of water. Then he returned to his wife, who was staring at Rose McCord with white, horrified face. Miss Franklin and the two young people alone were unmoved.

"Will this satisfy you?" said Curtis.

"Yes, yes, no more," muttered McClure, in a dazed, helpless way.

"I hope you will not think hardly of me," Rose appealed; "I had to come."

"Go, woman, go," he said, brokenly. When she was gone he turned to Curtis: "I have heard enough, Mr. Curtis, I fear, I understand you. Sir, your son is free. He shall never see Jean again, I will take her to a foreign land; he shall never find her. Tell them for me, Biddy," said the old man sinking into a chair, covering his face with his hands. "Promise them anything, everything. Make them go!"

"Ah, yes," cried Biddy, going up to Curtis; "you haven't the heart to say no more. See, my sweet girl there — that pitiful face — Jeannie — Jeannie, you're our own, own darlin' still. We loves you better nor it all. Go now, you men, an' you, young Will; it can't never be; never think of Jean no

more; don't break her heart by lovin' her now; see what it's brought on her! Oh, my Jeanie, girl, we'll go away from this country, and never come back, you'll be happy again in time. Go, ye men, now; you've got what you come for. If you've the hearts even of bad men, you'd not kill that child with your story."

"I have no wish to say anything more," said Curtis coldly. "You see it is impossible for my son to marry that girl."

"Sure, I'd ruther she'd die than see enny of your faces again," Biddy cried warmly. "It's hard on young Will for he's an honest lad, an' not like you at all; but he's of your blood—your son—and the sorror—God pity him it has got to fall on him, too."

"Wait, mother," said Jean, firmly; "you forget me. There is something you and father know; Miss Franklin and I are ignorant. I would be happy if my dear Will never knew; but I will not sail under false colors again. If there is sin or shame in my birth, let me know it! Whatever my parents were, I am their child. They are dead and defamed; they shall have a protector in me. These gentlemen have opened your eyes by mere mention of people's names; you are horror-stricken—I demand to know why? The world will tell me some day, cruelly and without mercy. You are here dear father—mother—aunt—people who have made my life so happy. You will comfort me, pity me. You know it was no fault of mine what my parents were. You have

good hearts, you are kind, Will. Stay please, and listen. It will help you to bear what our separation means. If it is a shameful story of crime and wrong it will come well from your lips, Mr. Curtis," she went on, looking at Curtis; "for your face is like one I used to see in terrible dreams of my childhood. Tell me what you know; I can bear it."

"Tell what he will," cried his son, "it shall not influence me. Jean I will never give you up. I will dog your steps, I will follow you to the end of the earth."

Curtis had been undecided, now he hesitated no longer; he sat back in his chair corresedly.

"Will's last remark has made it necessary I should go on; some diseases need heroic treatment. Well, you have heard of the Johnsons?" he said, addressing Miss Franklin, who stared at him blankly as if he were not speaking to her. "They had a child, Jane; they adopted a girl, Mary MacDonald, they went to live in Desperation Gulch. They mined for gold in a creek there. I was a miner then, and Brooks here. These Johnsons, low, ignorant people, sold liquor, adding to the drunkenness and vice in the camp. The children ran wild like little wolves; they were half starved, and ignorant as the people who kept them. Winter came on; the miners went over the hill to Perry's Grant and lost sight of the Johnsons. One day my wife and son, Will here," (Will started eagerly), "went down the mountain side and found these two little children,

half starved, huddled up under a tree in the sunshine. Will gave them his lunch, which they ate eagerly." (Here Jean's eyes met Will's, and a wan, ghost of a smile crossed her lips.) "Childlike he went again to find the children. It was after a horribly cold night. He did not find them, but wandered down to the old tree where he saw the two Johnsons burying a box. Frightened at a crime he must have known by instinct, he rushed back to Perry's Grant and told the men. A mob collected —I am not ashamed to say I was a ring-leader—" Here Brooks moved uneasily in his chair. "I was a ring-leader," repeated Curtis. "I had heard my boy's story of the starved little children under the tree; I knew what to expect."

"You struck my mother and made her fall," said Will. "You wanted the rope, and she tried to stop you. She died the next morning."

"Your memory is faulty, Will; you were only eight at the time," went on Curtis, hurriedly. "The mob rushed down the hill to the cabin. The Johnsons could not tell where Mary MacDonald was; one man found the mound; we unearthed the coffin. My God! what a sight! The child was starved to a skeleton, one leg was nearly cut off with a hatchet stroke, two great gashes were on her head, and her hands and feet were frozen—yes, frozen; and she, that awful cold night—the coldest ever known in that region—lay in a fireless attic, with an old gunny sack—wet with her martyr blood—for a bed. Those

men went mad; they would have tortured the fiends inch by inch, but I said, 'hang them, lynch them!' The mob caught up my words; they hurried the miserable creatures down the valley to an old pine and strung them up like dogs and left them there to rot. It was not half bad enough. They were well fed, comfortable, warm; that child was starving, miserable, beaten, bruised, frozen to death. Bah, it makes me sick even after all these years to think of it."

They listened in ghastly silence to his swift words, then Jean said wildly:

"Yes, yes; I know. It was no dream. She, little Mary, I slept under her; she was cold, she would not speak. They made me warm; then all the men came; I crawled under a quilt, I hid. They went away; there was no Mary, no one, I looked, I cried, no one, no one! I hid myself in the bed, all alone in that hut. Then there came two men; it was light again. They found me—one of them dragged me out, clutched my arm, and," cried Jean, thrusting the fringe of golden curls from her forehead, "he struck me with a great whip here! Here on my forehead!"

On her white forehead glowed a deep mark, red as blood. The scar had come as living proof she was the Johnson's child.

"You are the man—you!" the frenzied girl screamed, pointing to Curtis, who, pale and guilty, had no words now. "You would have killed me! Some

one, another man, took me on a horse. It is all a blank until I remember the Greens and that house. Marry your son? Never. Let him despise me, let all the world despise me. What does it matter to me? I can not deny the story of a shameful crime and wrong, I can but suffer and bear it. If I carry the mark of your blow like a brand of Cain, you shall carry the curse of a murderer in your heart. Low as I am—child of what parents—I never can sink to your level—I would not try to murder a helpless little child that I might steal the land rightfully hers! Mr. McClure," she went on, grown suddenly calm; "you are kind, all of you, and good; but you feel the shock, the horror of this story. I will go to-night to Miss Wallace. Something tells me she does not know yet. It will keep me from going mad to be with her. She has suffered—she has lost a lover—" cried Jean with a wild laugh. "She—oh God, have mercy! Help me! No, no; do not speak—for God's sake don't touch me. What am I? What am I? The leper cries—in the Bible, you know—'Unclean, unclean'—"

She ran out then and left them, and they heard the door slam.

McClure followed. He heard Miss Wallace's gate slam, the bell ring, and he saw by the hall light streaming out in to the darkness, Jean go in, and the door close behind her.

CHAPTER XVI

WILL BECOMES A COWBOY

"You have accomplished what you came for?" said McClure re-entering the library; "is there anything further you wish to say?"

The old Scotchman endeavored to be cool but his gray hair was disordered, his eyes bloodshot and wild. "Nothing; I regret it, sir. The girl herself forced me," Curtis answered uncomfortably.

"You have my sympathy," said the Senator manfully. "Do not think me an enemy. I love and honor Jean; if she would have me? I would marry her to-morrow. I was brought here against my will."

"I believe you," said poor McClure nervously. "Jean is much obliged—great honor I'm sure. You will go now?"

"First" cried Will coming from the window where he had been half hidden by the curtains, "let me say a few words. I am to blame for this. In my mad love for Jean, I have brought all this sorrow on her happy home. Oh if I could have taken it on me! Let me say my last to you, Mr. McClure, you honest gentleman, my father from this moment is nothing to me. You heard what I said when he told me the story? He struck my mother down, he

killed her. I swear it, for he broke her heart by slow cruelty and finished his work by that blow. Let him deny it if he dare. Her father shall demand a reckoning yet. You heard his story of the Johnsons; my story is only that he stole the Johnson's mine—he took the land of the man he murdered, of the woman he murdered—he says he was the ringleader in that mob; now you know why. He made his millions, whose money is it? That child's—the child he would have killed—the girl who to-day bears the scar of his blow. I have no more to say—never from this moment will I see him again. Forgive me, Mr. McClure; I have not meant this; I could not even have dreamed it. Dear Mrs. McClure, forgive me! If the time ever comes when she can hear my name without a shudder tell her I loved her, nothing can make me change. Perhaps, in a better world, if there is one—we can come together again. I may not be the son of her parents' murderer there!"

He went out and they heard his horse galloping away in the darkness.

"I hope your work has pleased you," said Miss Franklin, for McClure and his sobbing wife had left the room. "It remains for me to show you the door, and to hope you will never pass this threshold again. Let me assure you, Senator Brooks, and Mr. Curtis, though my ancestors came over in the 'Mayflower', and our family have been favorably known in every generation since that period, your

remarks have not lowered Miss Jean McClure in my esteem; I regard her—"continued Miss Franklin, following them to the door, hurling her words after them like a malediction—"I regard her as the victim of a vile conspiracy."

Curtis went back to the hotel, where he found his wife in a hysterical state. He calmed her as best he could, and they departed that night for New York. Curtis never told his wife the story of the interview, but she knew that it had been worse than he expected, and she wisely refrained from questioning him. Will's name was not mentioned in the home; by degrees he was forgotten, and the younger children never remembered him at all. Henry Curtis changed the final disposition of his property, leaving the name of his eldest son out. He never was quite at peace in his heart after his return from Denver. He remembered his son's horror and contempt, the angry truths he had uttered with scornful lips; but Henry Curtis' worst specter was not remembrance, but reality. He daily dreaded the stern featured, white-haired old sea captain, who would call him to account for his daughter's death, and would bring up that forgery of the past to overwhelm him with shame and dishonor. The world was darker for Henry Curtis' wife; for her light nature caught the shadow of his miserable moods, diamonds, carriages and fashionable life palled upon her sometimes. She thought, half wistfully, of the days of poverty and patience in Desperation Gulch.

The days of poverty of the past often seem brighter and sunnier than those of present prosperity.

When Will left the McClures', he rode out on a lonely road in Highland. It led over the hills toward the mountains; he did not know nor care where. He dashed on at a gallop. His mare was a good animal, but not calculated for a twenty-mile run. She began to stumble and breathe heavily.

"I'm a brute even to a brute," sighed Will; "go on, Dolly, there's a light ahead."

As he rode up, he saw the lights came from the windows of a dilapidated wooden building. At a rail in front a number of saddle horses were tied, who were kicking at each other and champing their bits. Will saw through the window a bar-room and a number of men dressed in rough flannel shirts, with leather leggings, wide-brimmed hats, long boots with spurs and prominent revolvers, sitting at a table drinking, while a tall young fellow in the same costume strode up and down the room in a fret about something. The landlord heard the sound of the mare's feet, and came to the door.

"Who's thar?" he yelled.

"I want a night's lodging," Will said, riding up to the door. "Can I get it here?"

"If these gents is willin'," said the landlord obsequiously. "Thy're cowboys an' raises h—," he added in a low tone.

"What's he givin' yer?" chuckled a big red-headed fellow, coming to the door, whirling the landlord

out of the way. "Skeerin' yer 'bout us eh? Ride in here, an' let's look at ye."

"I'll come in," said Will pleasantly; "but my mare's tired and skittish; the room might frighten her; she's used to horses, not donkeys."

A bullet whizzed by Will's head at that, while a crowd of grinning faces gathered at the door. Will calmed his mare, saying carelessly:

"You're a bad shot; I wish you'd been a better."

"Come in," said the red headed man, known from his lurid hair as "Blazes." "Landlord, take keer o' that animel, an' don't stint the provender neither. None of your rusty oats an' rat-bit corn. Come in, young fellow. Here's the cowboys of Brush's round-up; we're bound for the Republikin, an' we're stoppin' here ter water, bein' thirsty."

Will made himself at home, ordering drinks for the crowd.

"Want another hand?" he asked, when they were agreeably communicative.

"Here's a chance for ye, Charley," said Blazes. "That young saplin is a green han'. He joined us in Denver, got a rig an' a broncho; his gal went back on him or the old man did; got out ten miles, they sent word by a mounted perliceman—Charley come home—old man'll give him a job on the place an' him an' the gal kin be spliced right off, sooner the better. We ses no go, Charley; perlice goes back, Charley goes on. Look at the tears in his peepers—booby!"

Lubberly Charley essayed a melancholy smile.

"Fine ornament, him!" grinned Blazes.

"I wonder now," said Will, thoughtfully, "if I could not join you? Suppose, Charley, you and I change clothes. "I'll throw in this watch and chain; we're the same height and bigness. My mare's worth $150; you may have her if you will let her rest till morning. She's winded by the run. I'll take your broncho; I am a fair rider. I'll pick up the business fast enough."

"Be yer in airnest, 'n is that watch your'n?" said Charley, aghast.

"Yes, of course it is." Will cried impatiently.

"Who've yer killed? Don't be skeered, wunt blow on yer," said Blazes, with interest. "You're a blood!"

"I'm like Charley, my girl has jilted me. I want to be lost to her and all the rest. I haven't killed anyone, but I'd like to."

"Well now," said Blazes, good naturedly, a little disapppointed, the reason was so tame, "Charley kin be spared; the cows 'ud eat him, enny way, he's such a green, tender thing. Ye're a lonely turtle dove—we've hed lots on 'em; they rastles with fried pork purty lively at the end of a week. Yer'll git over it, I guess. Strip, now, if ye're comin', we've no time to waste."

The two men changed clothes. Will made a handsome cowboy, but Charley was rather a melancholy object in a New York tailor's best.

"Keep the clothes shady a few days," cautioned Will; "they might think you murdered me. Take the watch; my father gave it to me; I hate him, I would destroy it anyway."

Charley ambled off in his new attire to find a looking-glass and to show himself to the landlord's fat wife. Will followed the cowboys outside. He settled the score with the landlord, parting with his last cent.

"This is your'n," said Blazes, pointing out a vicious looking sorrel, smaller than a horse, known as a broncho—a wonderfully intelligent little animal in his business, and one who seems to take a spiteful delight in outwitting and tormenting unruly cattle.

"What name?" asked Blazes, as Will swung himself into the saddle.

"Hawley," said Will quickly.

"Three cheers for Hawley!"shouted Blazes. "Three cheers and a snorter!

There followed three wild yells, a chorus of pistol shots, and with this fusillade, by way of a parting benediction to the landlord, and an address of welcome to the new arrival, the wild mob of bronchos with their wilder riders dashed pellmell along the road, then off across the plains.

"It's a mercy we've the house left," said Mrs. Landlord, looking after them.

"They're a bad lot," said metamorphosed Charles —a traitor when they were out of earshot.

When the horses were a mere speck on the prai-

rie in the light of the moon now high in the heavens, the red lantern and shining eyes of a train shot across the plains to the eastward, rumbling like distant thunder, leaving a serpentine trail of smoke far behind. Henry Curtis little dreamed that speck on the horizon was his son riding with a mad crowd of cowboys, the wildest, maddest of them all.

The new life suited Will. He learned to be expert with the lariat, he was the most reckless rider of all. He went into the wildest herds, he sought danger, but escaped unscathed. The living was hard at first; he had to learn to eat bread with a greenish tinge and soda taste, ham fried in a big kettle, or corned beef and pork. Boiled potatoes seemed rather plain embellishments to a dinner of fried pork, but he grew to relish it, and had a terrible appetite; after all that camp cook labored under difficulties of fire and accessories to the culinary art that would have driven a French cook distracted.

Will slept at night wrapped in his blanket, his bed the plains, his roof the star-studded sky. He went days without washing his face; his beard grew in a ragged, trampish style; his hair was untidily long and he was as brown as an Indian. He learned cowboys were, on the whole, a good class of men. They were fond of healthy fun; they liked to scare greenhorns who had formed wild ideas of them, and people like the fat landlord were irre-

sistible. They paid for everything they got and for the damage they did. They were chivalrous and gentlemanly to women, as a rule, tender-hearted to animals, and like sailors, were robbed and cheated when at the mercy of traders and lodging-keepers. They were brave and daring, and honest to their employer's interest. Will found much to admire and much to commend in the cowboys he lived among; he thought that, along with the pioneers, the miners, the cowboys held a foremost place in the development of the West.

So life went on across the wide plains, and he saw no face but his companions. He rode his broncho and had two others in the herd, for each man has three or more horses and rides one until it is tired, then the next day takes another.

"The 'roundup' is to gather in the cattle of the owner's private mark, separate the other brands, single out the brandless or 'mavericks', and brand the calves. It is no light task, for the vast herds of cattle stray hundreds of miles, and rounding them up to a common center is a work of weeks. When the herd is rounded the cattle must be singled out, divided, the different brands set apart in little herds from the center one, and so on until the work is done. The cowboy singles out his animal, dashes into the herd and drives it out; frequently the animal runs a long distance, until finally captured by the lariat and thrown. Cows with calves are refractory, and the calf has often to be secured

to make the mother come. The calves seem possessed of all the agility and daring of antelopes in their efforts to escape. Sometimes the central herd gets frightened and stampedes; then good by to the unfortunate cowboys in its path.

A round-up makes a marvelous picture.

There is first the blue Colorado sky; and how hot and blue it is! Then far, far away, the brown plains just turning to faint green; in the foreground, a forest of horns—a moving bronze-red mass all quivering—the herd. Apart from it stand groups of cattle with a distracted, lonesome look. In the distance a wild steer is racing with a horseman; here a cowboy rushes into a herd and out gallops a cow with a bleating calf, which runs in every direction. Here is a steer lying on his side on the ground, the lariat rope on his horns. There a crowd of cowboys striving to hold a distracted group from heading in a wrong direction. Over the mass of cattle dust is rising like smoke. It is pawed up by the myriads of impatient hoofs. The air resounds with the bleating of calves, the lowing and roaring of the cattle. Afar off are the white tents of the camp, and near them a herd of horses grazing on the crisp buffalo grass, in friendly companionship, ready to run over the prairie and test the cowboy's best effort to secure them.

A cowboy's life is a daring one, full of excitement and bravery, of wild haste and courage; still, it is hard; work is steady and wearing, and fare

not the best. But the men are men, riding their half-tamed horses and managing, maneuvering, separating, gathering those terrified cattle with the skill of a general over a mighty army.

Will thought of Jean. In his wildest moods, when he and a few boon companions rode down to a little settlement and drank hard and deep, her face would rise before him, to make him desperate. He would drink the harder, poor Will! She was not for him; he could not marry her. Then he would grow wilder; reeling in his saddle, waving his wide-rimmed hat, he would dash across the plain like an Indian on the most vicious broncho of the lot. He never failed in his duty no matter how severe his dissipation, and no fault could be found with him.

Some of the older men thought it a pity the lad was going down hill so fast, he was such a jolly companion, generous and good-hearted. They reasoned with him; he would laugh, then say with an oath:

"Let me have my fun, boys. Drink kills the trouble in me. If that wasn't killed it would lay me out. Fill up my glass again. I'll drink till I forget!"

They thought he bore a charmed life, he was so reckless in his ignorance at first; and when he knew the work, was skilled with the lariat, he was worse than ever. He sought danger, he hungered for death; but lived and grew stronger, more manly and more reckless.

"If it had happened now," he thought one night, as he lay in his blanket looking up to the stars, "I would have silenced him—my father. I would have taken her in my arms and carried her away by force. I would have stopped her mouth with kisses and laughed her out of her sorrow. I would kill a man who dared to taunt her. I would give her a home in a wilderness, she and I, and that past should never trouble me. Oh, my Jean?

" 'But dearer than my deathless soul,
I still would love my Jean.'

"How that song haunts me," he muttered half aloud. "It's true—so pitiful true. Oh, Jean, Jean —has the end come? Are you lost to me forever?" He covered his face with his blanket, and when at last his exahusted physical nature overcame his mental misery and he fell aleep, there were tears on his dark eye-lashes. Strangely pathetic his recumbent figure, his wasted face lying on his bronzed, muscular arm. His mother would have wept over him. Drifting to destruction with no hand to stay him!

CHAPTER XV

A NEWSPAPER'S TESTIMONY

Jean rushed from the house that night, with a wild hope of escape from herself. She had no definite purpose; but a strange desire to go to the woman who had had a sorrow, who had suffered twenty years. What was it people whispered of Miss Wallace, that Jean had heard her mother hint to Miss Franklin? There must have been some sin, some shame, in Miss Wallace's past life, that made her withdraw from the world, and made her face so inexpressibly sad, so prematurely aged.

"Clar fer goodness, Miss Jean, you skeered me," said old Sam, ushering the trembling girl into the hall. "Ringin' de bell dis time o' night, standin' dar like a ghost, all white an' skeered-like. Is de folk sick ober dar? What's de matter?"

"Nothing, Sam," Jean answered faintly. "Tell Miss Wallace I want to see her, just a moment."

As she spoke a door opened and Rose McCord came into the hall.

"You here?" she said, coldly; "you must be out of your mind—at this time, too! Miss Wallace has been in bed an hour. She can not be disturbed."

"Ah, do not send me away," pleaded Jean; "I can not go home to-night."

Jean saw even this woman had changed from polite attentiveness, she had become familiar and uncivil. She wondered if everybody would change, too; if this was a forecast of the future?

"You will have to go," said Rose, opening the door.

"Now Rose, you ain't gwine to do no sich a thing," said Sam. "You ain't de boss ob dis house. I'll tell Miss Wallace. You set still, honey, in that cheer. Rose ain't got no right to talk ter ye in dat way."

"I'll go, I'll go," Jean cried wildly, staggering to her feet. "She is right; I won't disturb Miss Wallace; I have no business to be here."

"Neither now nor at any time after to-night," Rose went on rudely.

"What is the trouble?" called Miss Wallace, coming to the balustrade of the winding staircase looking down from the upper hall. "Who has no business to come to me? To whom are you speaking, Rose?"

"Ter Missey Jean, missus," put in Sam hurriedly, glad of an opportunity to vent his spite on Rose; "Rose's been orderin' de young leddy off de premises suah."

"Jean here!" cried Miss Wallace, coming down the stairs in her trailing black wrapper like a shadow, "Jean, white and terror-stricken and trembling like

a little frightened bird! What is it my sweet? Tell me your trouble. Rose McCord, go to your own part of the house—the servants' quarters. What have you to do with my guests? You forget your place; you abuse my kindness."

"You don't know who that girl is," said Rose, doggedly. "Let me tell you, then you will thank me, not blame me."

"Rose, Rose," cried Miss Wallace, sadly, "have you forgotten my past? Are you so sullenly obstinate you will never learn my hopes and my desires? This dear Jean, pure as a lily—and you, Rose McCord, daring to malign her to me! Go, go; do not come to me until you are sorry, Rose. Come Jean," she said as Rose went away in ill-humor, "come to my room with me, my own room, and I will comfort you and console you."

"I had better go—you will despise me, I am deceiving you," said Jean, in a dazed way. "She said so—all of them. No one pities me. The whole world is against me."

"Help us, Sam," called Miss Wallace, anxiously, "See—Jean is falling. Her head is turning; her hands are like ice. Send Aunt Molly up, and you ride to Denver for a doctor."

Together they carried the unconscious girl upstairs, and laid her on Miss Wallace's bed then sped away for the doctor. Old black Molly came waddling up, and they put Jean to bed, laying cool cloths on her head and fanning her. One moment she was un-

conscious, the next she started up screaming.

"Don't let them tell you, Miss Wallace; keep them away! Miss Wallace hide me, hide me!"

She screamed and moaned, and it seemed an age before the doctor came.

Dr. Morris was a gray-haired old man, who had known Miss Wallace for twenty years. He had not crossed the threshold of her home since her father died. He did not think of that when he drove up to the door, but of a day when a little child was born eighteen years ago. He would never forget that night, the deaths of the two men, Dwight Wallace and Roy MacDonald, and the terrible wrath of the old Judge at what seemed his daughter's shame. He prescribed for Jean a simple soothing draught then went over to McClure's and told them how she was, delivering a sympathetic message from Miss Wallace. After talking with McClure and his wife, who were so strangely upset and sad, arguing from this that Jean had probably quarreled with them, the old doctor drove home. As he crossed the bridge and the hoofs of his horse rattled over the planks, he looked back to the Wallace mansion on the heights.

"I'd like to have seen that girl's left foot," he said, meditatively; "I'd give—I'd give a year of my best practice to do so."

With these strange reflections he touched up his horse and drove on.

Jean was better the next day, and on the third was up and dressed. Miss Wallace was a loving and

tireless nurse. Jean begged the McClures and Miss Franklin not to come to see her; she sent her dear love, but she felt the sight of them would recall what she tried to forget. It almost broke their hearts, and poor McClure walked up and down inside the fence that separated his grounds from Miss Wallace's all day; Sam came out every half hour with comforting assurances from the sick chamber, obtaining for them a silver dollar through the fence, which he took with a thoughtful air, as if his gesture of acceptance was entirely unconscious.

The afternoon of the third day, Jean came back to her old self. She had been lying so quiet that Miss Wallace thought her asleep.

"Miss Wallace," she said, with her old bright smile, "I've been playing 'possum, I've been lying awake watching you, thinking how much I love you. Now don't get up; I am all right, I want nothing—yes, I do one thing."

"What, Jean?"

"The name of the first paper published in Denver?"

Miss Wallace grew white, a frightened look came into her eyes. She struggled a moment before she could speak, then she said brokenly:

"Why do you ask?"

A haunting fear came to her that Jean knew of her sad history, and wanted to have that knowledge confirmed.

"Because I want to read the history of my par-

ents' death," said Jean firmly. "It is in the paper I know. I shall see it, nothing can stop me; I must read for myself. It will tell me nothing but what I know. I would like to go with you to find the paper; I want to read its files for the year 1868."

"'The Pioneer' is the earliest paper. We might go to its office," said Miss Wallace doubtfully; "but Jean, is it right to harrow yourself up with old stories that can only make you miserable?"

"I'm not of a gloomy nature," said Jean, with a wan attempt at a smile. "See, I am not morbid; I am natural. A child should know of its parents, no matter how bad, how low they were."

She coaxed a long time, at last Miss Wallace consented, and the next day she and Jean drove to Denver. In the pocket of Jean's cloak, old McClure had put a blotted note and a $50 bill.

"BONNIE JEAN:—Come home soon. We love you. We know and remember nothing but that you are our Jean. Take this money and buy something, or give it to the poor; only ask me for more. Come back to a daughter's rights; be our child again. I am your fond old father, ALEX. MCCLURE."

Passing through the street, Jean wanted to stop at a dry goods store. When she came out she had changed her pretty blue gown for a black one, and her blue hat with its long plumes for a black bonnet and veil. She answered lightly all Miss Wallace's objections, saying she would go back to

happy colors when her life was happier. With her pretty gown Jean lost her light-heartedness and brightness. She seemed no longer a merry girl, but a grave faced woman.

"You are sorrowful, you wear black, Miss Wallace," said she sadly; "the bright dress and hat mocked me. I could not bear them. A black cloud has come over my blue sky. I know now why people who have lost loved ones wear black."

They drove to the newspaper office, where Jean was gone a long time, while Sam drove up and down the street. A polite young clerk in the business office of the paper hunted up the volume of the year 1868.

"It is dusty and yellow, but quite interesting," he exclaimed; "and of course possesses a historical value."

"Certainly," said Jean, turning the leaves with trembling hand. She read a long account of the lynching of the Johnsons. The story of Mary MacDonald, a waif and a stray—of her brutal treatment, and the body being brought to Denver to exhibit to a vulgar throng of curiosity seekers. She read that Curtis and Brooks were ringleaders in the mob, that both were equally guilty. In fact, the whole article was a sort of glorification of their deed.

The glib young clerk, officious in his zeal to help so pretty a woman, peered over her shoulder.

"Awful thing, that lynching," he said. "Those Johnsons were brutes—fiends, but hanging the wo-

man was a lasting disgrace to the men and the country. Though it seems she was the most guilty. Old, you see, a day after the occurrence. Well, news was hard to get then."

"Who furnished the account?" Jean asked. Her name was not there; there was no mention of a child.

"Do you know, John?" said the officious clerk, addressing a barnacle in the office corner—a gray-haired old gentleman with spectacles. "Who brought the account of the lynching of the Johnsons to this office?"

"Let me see," said the old gentleman deliberately, with that peculiar gusto a pioneer feels when asked for events in Denver's early history. "Let me see—I was here—I'll never forget the excitement; the mob in Denver wanted to dig the Johnsons up and hang them over again. The child's body lay at Sim's shop a day or two; then the excitement died out. A queer old fellow here—MacDonald—hauled the poor little body in its calico slip, in a rough box, out to the graveyard; he said, never a prayer was preached over her, and he was never paid for hauling her out and burying her but then he was her father, inhuman old rascal. Well, that's a mob—all fire one moment, indifferent the next. Indignation don't cost anything; burial—a decent shroud and coffin—would. Well, let's see what names are in the account? Oh, Brooks and Curtis. They told us. The story there is, of course, one-

sided; for the Johnsons were dead, and these two men were the ringleaders in the lynching."

"There is something else, though," he went on, running his fat forefinger up and down the columns, looking for a paragraph. "I remember, I wrote it myself, though I was condemned loudly for it by the population here. Let me see" (a long accent on the me). "Ah, here it is!"

He read with some relish of his own literary ability, and enjoyment of the production, in the droning voice good old gentlemen use, with marked slowness to emphasize his own strong points.

"Yesterday Henry Curtis and Tom Brooks seized the Johnson claim, located in Desperation gulch, a mile from Perry's grant. The claim was directly above the section of the creek worked by Curtis and Brooks. It is rumored they are about to sink a shaft in the hill, under the site of the Johnson cabin. These Johnsons, it will be remembered, were relatives of old Hard-luck Johnson, who came here in 1856, and located the claim. It is a singular thing that these two men were foremost in the horrible outrage a week ago in the Gulch, where the Johnsons without trial or chance for defense, were brutally lynched for the murder of Mary McDonald. It seems to point out a motive for their action and to throw a new light on the lynching. If Denver wishes to preserve decency, order and safety, she should order a thorough investigation of these men's claims to the property, and advertise for relatives of the Johnsons."

"Which would," added the old gentleman, benignly, "have brought us in advertising, besides sending the 'Pioneer' through the East, making a sample copy of a Western production" (with much emphasis on the pro). "No notice was taken of the paragraph," the old gentleman went on, with an injured air, "and the whole matter was dropped. Several subscribers to the 'Pioneer' calling with shotguns to have their papers stopped or a different tone adopted by the paper, it was considered policy to follow popular sentiment; but there was a queer thing happened that day. See here, this verse!"

"Willy Curtis--a little boy of eight years—was found last night in Rodger's barn, hiding in an old chest. He owned up, after much questioning, he had run away from Desperation Gulch that morning and walked twenty miles. He said he was going East to his grandfather in Boston, and that he hated his father. He was a manly little fellow, seemingly indifferent to pain, for his feet were swollen and cut in many places, and he had eaten nothing all day. Jonas Fletcher, of Perry's Grant, happened to be in town, and he took the boy home in the morning."

"I also wrote that," said the old gentleman with modest pride.

"It's very nice," said Jean unsteadily. "Thank you for your kindness."

"Not at all, not at all," smiled the old gentleman, conducting her to the door, while the clerk

looked on in dismay. "Ah, Miss Wallace's carriage —a fine lady—visiting there? Like to read our files, eh? Historical; I've been on that paper, off and on, twenty years. Come over again; come often; ladies are always welcome, and such beautiful ones!" he finished with a burst of pent-up admiration. He escorted her to the carriage, standing hat in hand till she drove away.

"You're smart," said the clerk angrily, as the old gentleman returned smiling to the office.

"I was always considered so," smiled the barnacle, sinking into a chair and resuming his paper. "I seemed to be the favored one in that direction. You'll have to grow in wisdom and years, young man, to get ahead of me."

"Where now?" said Miss Wallace.

"Home, to dear father McClure," Jean replied brightly. "Miss Wallace, I never can be grateful enough to you. You have saved me, for I was frantic that night."

Jean went home, where McClure, his wife and Miss Franklin welcomed her more fondly than ever. They begged she would not wear the black dress; but in this she was firm, and they had to become accustomed to a pale Jean, who seldom smiled—a young sweet face with a shadow over it; beautiful eyes, once bright and merry, sadly thoughtful now —a slight figure in a black gown, a golden head bowed over work or book, a voice low and hesitating, and slender hands, growing more slender every day.

One night when Jean was walking near the dividing fence between her home and Miss Wallace's, a figure came out of the shadow of the trees and motioned to her. She saw in the moonlight Rose McCord, with wild eyes and disheveled hair half hidden under a hooded cloak. It was a warm, spring-like night, and Jean had come out to walk away her sad thoughts. Little those who loved her knew what her brave heart bore.

"Come here," whispered Rose hoarsely. "Don't refuse me. I must speak to you."

"I would not refuse you, Rose," said Jean kindly.

"Don't you hate me, detest me?" hissed Rose. "Wouldn't you like to have me turned away from here? Haven't you tried to influence Miss Wallace to send me away on account of that night?"

"Did she tell you that?" Jean asked quietly.

"No, she said you begged her not to speak to me about it, or let it influence her, for I was justified in what I did; but I hardly believed her."

"She said the truth; I have nothing against you; no, nor any one. I know all that shameful story. I can see why people should avoid—dislike me. It says in the Bible the sins of the parents shall be visited on the children unto the third and fourth generation. Their sin can be visited on me, but never on another child. I shall never cause a child to turn on me and say: "You are my mother. You have made me endure a miserable life. Through you I am of an accursed race."

"You're a strange girl," cried Rose, "so calm. Yet you're whiter and sadder—all your fine things, your riches, your beauty don't help you now."

"I have been poor, Rose McCord," said Jean quickly. "You saw me in that horrible home. I was poor in Coyote Gulch, so were dear Mr. McClure and his wife. Surely you would wish me no ill-will for that. The world is open to all. The mountains are there, the gold and silver are there. Would you have Mr. McClure burn the money? Who is more charitable, nobler than he? Shame on you for a base jealousy, you in your happy home need never feel. Have you been starved, tortured, beaten? I have; be satisfied."

"I hardly meant that," muttered Rose.

"I thought you could not. I will not believe a sister woman so ignoble."

"I've been cared for comfortably," said Rose, hastily. "I've had a kind mistress—but she was a mistress, I a servant; and then, Jean McClure, I loved a man for twenty years and more—ever since I was a girl of sixteen. He sought me out, he won my girl's love that has never changed. He fooled me for years; he said he would marry me when he was rich. I waited—oh God, how long! He did get rich; he sold his mine and went East in the night like a thief. He never wrote me; he cared not if I lived or died. Then he came back here, rich, honored, a gentleman in manners. I had studied to make myself a lady; I had hoped he

loved me still. I saw him here after the weary waiting, I saw him loving another woman, girl, young accomplished, rich, beautiful. I saw him at her side every day It was maddening, a daily misery."

"Who was the girl?" cried Jean.

"You," said Rose hoarsely. "You!"

"But I did not know. Was it Senator Brooks?" said Jean, a light breaking upon her.

"It was. You would not have what I would give my soul for. You spurned the love I yearned for. Then I went to him but he would not listen to me. I told him who you were; he said, 'prove it.' I said not unless he married me. He hated Will Curtis, he was smarting under his defeat, he wanted revenge, he promised, and I thought if he would marry me I could win his love after all. Then I told him—I, Miss Jean McClure. You owe me your downfall. Haven't I had revenge for your making him love you?"

"Do you think I deserved your enmity?" said Jean patiently.

"I neither knew nor cared," muttered Rose. "How do you feel now? Would you go to Miss Wallace? You may. I'm a reckless woman—a disappointed, heart-sick, half-mad woman. I would not care if she sent me away. I knew who you were. I found you—"

"I thank you for your part in the matter," said Jean, solemnly. "Truely I am grateful to you.

You were only an instrument in the hand of God to prevent the marriage that, sooner or later, would have made a terrible sorrow. We would have been bound—Will and I—and had we learned then the story of my parents, we should have turned from each other with angry reproaches and bitter loathing."

"Would you marry him, if it had not happened; if you had not been the Johnson's child?" Rose asked, with a wild laugh.

"Why ask that? Those questions are useless," said Jean, coldly. "Is this all you wish to say?"

"Not all—not all," cried Rose, seizing the girl's shawl. "I heard Brooks tell McClure he was coming to see you to-night. He has something to tell you. If you have any mercy in your soul, if you have a woman's heart, you will let me listen somewhere and hear it. Don't refuse—don't turn away! See me on my knees," cried the miserable woman, sinking to the ground. "See, I beg you, pray you; it is life to me, I must know—I will know."

"It would be dishonorable—mean—I could not," said Jean.

"No dishonor to him who is deceit," said Rose. "If you prevent me, I will let you go to your grave a thing of shame! No, no, Miss McClure, I do not mean that—no, no--you are going? Oh, have mercy on a woman—a bad woman. If you ever loved, if you saw your lover with another—if this man were your lover—I have sacrificed truth, hon-

or, all gratitude for him—for his interests; he will deceive me to the end."

"I will tell you what he says," said Jean.

"Tell me," groaned Rose—"You? I would not, could not believe it. I will, I must hear it from his own lips. Oh, Jean McClure, if it was your lover now would not your soul be on fire? Do you hate me? Is this refusal your revenge?"

"Rose McCord," said Jean, "are you possessed that you talk to me in this way? I have no revenge. Come, if you will!"

"Come!" echoed Rose.

"I saw the senator go up the steps a moment ago," said Jean. "They will call me. Take this key; the side door leads to my music-room; it is vacant in the evenings now, for I never open the piano. You can hide there behind the window curtains. You are making me a traitor and a spy, but I pity you from my heart."

CHAPTER XVIII

TWO WESTERN HERMITS

"He's in the parlor, Jean," whispered McClure as the girl came up the steps. "Sweet Jean," he added, kissing her fondly. "If he wants to marry my sad girl, what will she say?"

"What would you wish, father," Jean asked.

"That Jean be true to Jean," he said softly, and stole down the hall. He avoided the senator like a pestilence—disliking and dreading him. The Senator looked shocked when he saw Jean in her black dress with her pale face and sad eyes. How she had changed, and could such a woman be a child of the Johnson's, of Desperation Gulch?

"I will not ask you to sit down," Jean said coldly; "I think you have no right in this house where you have brought sorrow and trouble."

"I did my duty," said the Senator sadly. "I suffered intensely, at that interview."

Jean opened the music-room door.

"Hear, me, Miss Jean. You know me only as a successful man in politics and wealth, yet I came out here a wagon driver; I sprang from as low a stock as you—my people are ignorant and unlettered. I came out here the lover of a servant, a

red cheeked country beauty—Miss Wallace's maid. I worked night and day; at last I found wealth. I went East; I fled in the night to avoid this woman. I studied, worked, lifted myself to heights I had never dreamed of. After years I saw you—I loved you. Then this woman found me out. She told me you were the child of those Johnsons. I had given you up; I thought you were lost to me. I took hope at what she said; I put her off with promises. She had given them information on a promise that I would marry her. She my wife—a servant—and Mrs Johnson's sister?"

"What!" cried Jean. "She my mother's sister? Mr. Brooks, you must be wrong. It cannot be!"

"It is so, she told me herself to prove that she knew you. I wrote to Curtis in New York who you were. He came on; you know the rest, I had no hand in your parent's murder; I am guiltless. I love you, I honor you, Miss McClure. I have come to you at a time when you are a disgrace in the estimation of the very people who treated you as a daughter. You must have seen a change in the people about you. It is slight now to what it will be when the world finds out, as it must, who you are. Every door will be closed to you; but as the wife of Senator Brooks—loved and honored—the story must die out, you will find friends in the East and be happy."

"And this woman, my aunt, what of her?" said Jean, steadily.

"I was mad to tell you that," said Brooks; "she is a crazy woman. I will have her taken care of if she annoys us."

"Us," repeated Jean. "I have not answered you. Suppose I refuse you now as I did before; why should you not then marry this faithful woman who loves you?"

"You are mocking me," said the senator angrily. "Do not provoke me too far. I could never marry that woman—old, haggard, half witch, an ignorant servant. I will not heed you—you are jesting; it is a bad time to jest for I hold your fate in my hands."

"Have you not done all that can be done to harm me?" said Jean.

"Society does not know who you are," the senator said coldly; "it shall know to-morrow. Every door shall be closed against you, and the McClures will be avoided by everybody. Your story will react upon them—your disgrace will be theirs—you will mar their happiness and cloud their lives! Be generous, Jean, and spare them! Ah, I do not mean that," he went on eagerly taking her hand. "Why will you drive me to desperation? Why will you make me hateful in your sight? I love you, I love you! Have pity on me. Give me a litle liking. I will make you happy. Be my wife, Jean."

"Do not touch me," she cried with a movement of repulsion. "I cannot bear it. Wait a moment here." She left the room and came back with a

newspaper. "I got this in Miss Wallace's attic," she said slowly, her face so stern and cold, all the youth had died out of it. "It is a copy of a newspaper published in Denver on the first of September, 1868."

The senator took up the paper mechanically. His eye fell on the column headed "Lynching at Desperation Gulch — Just Punishment of Elisha Johnson and His Fiendish Wife—Hung on One Tree, etc." The paper dropped from his trembling hand to the floor.

"It is hopeless," he muttered. "I knew it was retribution. There would come some punishment. If you will not marry me," he said fiercely, "you shall never marry another man."

"Would you kill me, as you did my parents?" said Jean, provoked beyond control.

"No, I will do more. I will follow you wherever you go—I will flaunt your story in everybody's eyes. I will make you an object of avoidance and disgust; you shall be despised. I will make your story a cross for the McClures to bear. I will wear out their patience, their love for you, and I will hunt you, a friendless, loveless outcast, to your grave!"

He picked up the paper in his deliberate way and went out. When he slammed the gate, Jean went into the music room.

"Are you satisfied, Rose?" she asked gently.

Rose came from behind the curtains; she was pale, her eyes bloodshot, but she spoke calmly.

"Yes, Jean, you are a true-hearted girl. If I were a better woman I might like you. Still I will help you; little you know what lies in my power."

"Hush, Rose," said Jean solemnly: "you cannot help me, no one on earth can. The senator will not injure me. I have gone beyond all pain and suffering."

"What do you mean? Are you going to commit suicide?"

Jean smiled.

"I am not a coward to take my life, I am a young woman. I shall live long; but peace has come to me. My heart can suffer no more. There lies a path before me; if follow it I the trouble will be over. Aunt Rose, my mother's sister, let us be friends. I pity you, ah, I do pity you! He is not worthy your love."

"Aunt Rose, cried the woman with a shrill laugh. "Never that again—Away, let me go! I will not take your hand;—bad as I am Jean McClure you shall suffer no longer. There will come a day of reckoning, I shall be cast out into darkness; but light shall come to you."

She flung Jean's hand aside, darting out of the room as McClure and his wife, followed by Miss Franklin, came hurrying in.

"It was only Rose," said Jean, in answer to their questions.

"The senator has gone. Rose was here a short time; she is not well I think. She seemed excited and wild, that was all."

"Let's sit down and have an old-time talk," Mrs. McClure pleaded eagerly. "Here we are in the music room again, and Jean pretty, do sing for us." They gathered in a circle around the piano while Jean sang for them, she finished with her father's song," I Love My Jean." She kissed them good-night in her loving way and whispered to McClure the senator would never come again. He rejoiced that a great weight was off his mind. She stopped in the doorway a moment looking at them lovingly, yearningly; and they thought of her in the after wards, standing there looking back, with that strange sadness on her young face.

"Jean seemed like our own Jean again," said McClure in the privacy of his chamber to his wife.

"Yes, indeed," she answered heartily; "and I do hope no more senators will never darken these doors again."

Darkness settled down within and without the McClure mansion. Even the moon passed out of sight, as if she, too, were tired and went to bed. It was very still, only a low whine from Dicky, the dog—for from some (certainly to him) unaccountable freak, his mistress had fastened him out in a dismal shed instead of letting him lie in her room. Twelve o'clock, just the hour for ghosts to walk. Yet there could not be ghosts in the new mansion that had neither traditions nor musty lore. Certainly there was something stealing with noiseless step down the soft-carpeted stairs. How a stair

will creak under a stealthy step, how a door will sound under a careful opening. It was better outside; no one could hear her there. Was it better? The great still world, black and awful, the dark heaven, the faint stars and the sleeping city! Jean had been used to tender care; she was terrified at the sudden sense of desolation, night was hideous to her from imaginary evils. She crept down the lawn—out the gate. Which way should she go? Where could she hide? The city was so far from the great East where she would go and live unknown. But how was she to go? She looked across the river at the lights of the depot. She might go there; there would be cheap lodging-houses where she could stay until a train left the next day. She went down the hill to the bridge, stumbling in the darkness so new to her and groping blindly all the way. Hist! What was that! Something coming behind her—pattering feet—what could it mean? She stopped, paralyzed with terror that turned to a confused joy when Dicky, her brown dog, broken loose from his rope, leaped upon her, wild with delight.

Dicky, Dicky!" cried Jean, "how could you come—what shall I do?"

He would not be driven back, so Jean went hopelessly on. The idea of her own ultimate starvation had not seemed gloomy to her; but the dog—Will's gift—what could she do with him? After all, it was fate she could not go back now.

She crossed the bridge and went through the lighted streets of the city, here she found darkness was safety and light danger. Rude men spoke to her and followed her; but she drew her hood over her face and hurried on, the dog close beside her. At last, in an opening, she reached a long stretch of railroad tracks and followed them up. Several trains were at the depot some just come in, and some, she thought, about to start. She went up to the depot to inquire; the side door was locked. She hesitated a moment undecided. While she stood there a crowd of drunken men came around the building. Trembling, she shrank into a dark corner. Some of them went back to get another drink, and the rest went around the depot. Jean was hemmed in; what could she do? She started timidly back across the tracks to a low region near the river called "The bottoms," inhabited chiefly by Indians who lived in tents. She went around the rows of trains, thinking she might hide in the trees by the river till morning, if she could pass through that terrible settlement. Just as she was in the center of the tracks pistol-shots echoed from the lowlands, lights flamed in the tents, and the sound of angry voices and cries of pain arose. She heard men running on the wooden platform of the depot. What could she do now? She was by a long line of cattle-cars; the one behind her had an open door. She climbed up into it; Dicky, a trembling follower, jumped after her. Happily, in a corner stood

some empty barrels. She hid behind these, Dicky close to her. She saw lanterns flash across the track, and policemen go down to the tents. Soon the crowd came back, and went away, taking the wounded man and two vicious, dark-browed, would-be-murderers to the station house. Suddenly she felt a jar—another—a long, rattling jolting of the cars. They were in motion!

The brakeman had not locked that one car, but he thought he had. How great a change in life often hangs on some slight oversight. Jean was glad the train was moving, that fate had helped her in this way to escape from bringing sorrow and disgrace on the kind people who had been parents to her. She had meditated this step from the first moment of the awful discovery. She was in a wild, excited state, that allowed neither fear nor regret; she sat in dumb misery while the train went on and on, how many miles she did not know; but she could tell under the stars they were out on the plains.

They whirled through sleeping settlements, past silent ranches, near herds of cattle or horses, and by many a lone switch-house, with its lonelier keeper. It grew darker and darker, and she knew it must be near morning. Suddenly the train stopped at a water tank. A lonely house, little more than a hut, stood near the track, and she saw a white-haired old man come out of the hut and join the group of trainmen going down by the tank. It was dark at the rear end of the train where she was and

some distance from the tank, which was on the opposite side from the door of the cattle car. The lanterns made no light here. Jean had little time for thought, but she knew that at daylight she would be found out, and either put off the train, or if allowed to go on, the story of her flight would become known and give more distress to the McClures. She got up, cramped from her long ride, Dicky followed at her heels, snuffing the cold night air. She jumped lightly to the ground and crept down the embankment below the tracks, hiding in the shadow. Soon the train went on, and she was lost in the lonely place, utterly unprotected, for Dicky was not brave. He was not a year old, and kept close to her heels, rather to be guarded than to guard. There were two tracks, a station house and a great water tank like a gigantic barrel on a scaffolding. The station house was a queer wooden building, one story high, with little L's extending behind it like a train of cars. Near it was a bigger house for storage, and further on a driveway for cattle. The place she afterwards found out was Henderson's Station, where Henderson, a cattle king, shipped his cattle to the East.

The station house took on a gone-to-bed look. The light disappeared in the front windows, and appeared again in the L. Jean went up to the porch; her light step echoed in the deathlike stillness, and she shrank back behind the corner of the house, as she heard footsteps coming.

"I thought I heard some one," muttered a voice. I was sure of it."

"You're allus hearin' noises," said a surlier voice; "tain't more'n a coyote, 'n they're uncommon bold ter come so nigh."

The door opened and the old man Jean had seen pass the cattle-car came out on the porch. "Here's a dog," he cried, in great excitement. "How on earth did it get here? A brown setter—a fine animal. Poor feller! Come pup!" he chirped to Dicky, who had advanced a few steps when the light appeared, but who now stood defiant with a low growl that was a surprise to himself.

"How'd he git here?" asked the surly man; so bony and long, he was known along the line as the Telegraph Pole.

"He can't tell us," said the first speaker. "Pottle, you go and get the gun, there is something around the house there. I'm blessed if this dog ain't frozen to his place. It's a mystery."

"Gun be ——," said Pottle; the dorg 'ud run ef thar was suthin' thar quicker'n you would, which is sayin' a good deal. Give me the lamp. Here, come outer thar!"

Hesitating and trembling, Jean came out of the friendly shelter of the corner and followed Dicky to the porch. The light from the lamp fell on her sad, pale face—on her tear-wet blue eyes looking at them pleadingly. The two old men gazed at her as if she were an apparition.

"Where did you come from?" questioned the white-haired man, fixing his dim eyes on her in pitying admiration.

"I come from nowhere," Jean answered faintly; "I do not know where I am going. I only ask you to shelter me for a night. I have done wrong—unconscious wrong—and I am fleeing from it and the misery it will bring on those I love."

They still looked at her in alarmed surprise.

"Did you come alone?" the old man went on suspiciously.

"My dog, here," said Jean, timidly. "Only us two," Here Dicky looked up into her face and wagged his tail.

"From the east or west?" said Pottle.

"Places are nothing to me, sir; east or west—anywhere. I have no country; no home."

"Which, being translated," said the old man with a scholarly air, "means you don't want to tell."

"Please, no," said Jean. "If you will not let me have shelter in your house let me sleep in the building there; I have been out almost all night. I am so cold I cannot lie on the ground."

"Shame on us for senseless fools, standing here staring at you," cried the old man. "Come in, come in. You took us so by surprise—so sort of unnatural and unexpected, as if you'd dropped from the clouds. Sleep out doors, indeed? Well, I'd like to see you; the pup's anxious enough to come in; I'll warrant he's hungry."

"WHERE DID YOU COME FROM?" QUESTIONED THE WHITE-HAIRED MAN.—P. 256.

He led the way into the station house, to a cosy room where there was a dilapidated sofa, a red hot stove, rather rusty, a table and two chairs—a small fat one like himself, and one tall, somewhat hard, easy to associate with Mr. Pottle.

"Here's our boudoir, our reception-room, our dining-room and our kitchen. It's small but cosy, and here, Miss, is a chair that will rest you wonderful, though the springs are broken and the coverings faded."

'Who'er has travell'd life's dull round,
Where'er his stages may have been,
May sigh to think he still has found
The warmest welcome in an inn.'

"'This isn't an inn but we've a warm welcome for ye. Lord bless my soul, a-wandering on these dismal plains! 'The wanderer—'"

"Mac, don't heave no po'try at her; it'll skeer her. Where's the tea?" interrupted Pottle.

"I'll get it," said Mac with wonderful agility in one so old. "I'm cook; Pottle's telegrapher. His mind is above victuals; but he couldn't telegraph without a stomach and something in it. Lord, what a wonderful thing the telegraph is—tick, tick, and you're telling folks thousands of miles away what you're doing right here. Now don't look scared, pretty, we ain't going to telegraph about you. We believe you needed to be hid or you wouldn't have hid yourself. Now take off your bonnet and drink a cup of this tea. Look at the

dog! He's just set on having it. He'd drink it hot as 'tis. What's the matter with him?"

"He's sitting up for it. He'll ask for it," said Jean, with some animation.

Dicky had climbed into Pottle's chair, and was sitting up very straight and solemn on his hind legs.

"The mussiful man is mussiful to the dorg, ter foller Mac's style o' talk," smiled Pottle, bringing in a pan of milk and setting it before the dog.

"Pottle's got a cow and ten hens," Mac explained with pride, drawing up the sofa and beginning to set the table. "His hens is all laying now, and I'll make you a fine omelet. Don't say you're not hungry; the pup ate as if he'd not had a meal for a month, and I don't know how long you've been without food."

"Dicky always gobbles," said Jean.

"Dicky, eh? Nice name—nice pup. Now I feel you're not wanting to tell us your name, though the pup's did slip out, and we'll not ask it. Pottle and me is old philosophers; we've retired from the world and become hermits, we find this station just as good as a cave in the woods for that purpose, and healthy victuals better than roots and water—the hermit bill of fare. Hermits always sheltered travelers, asked no questions, sent in no bill, that's what we do; as long as you stay you'll be welcome."

He made her take a seat at the table, and he hung up her cloak with much care on a nail, re-

marking that "it looked as if it belonged there." Jean did eat with a relish. For weeks she had barely tasted food; but the ride, the keen bracing wind off the prairie, and the kind old faces and kind words made her want to eat. Dicky was not neglected either, as for the entertainers, this episode in their lonely life was like a dream. They could hardly believe the golden-haired girl in the black dress was a reality—and that she asked their poor hospitality. Pottle would cheerfully have wrung the necks of his ten prized fowls if she would have eaten of their remains; while Mac took a proprietary interest in her from the first, assuming a fatherly manner. Pottle was a bachelor, but Mac had been married several times, and knew the sensibilities of the softer sex.

After supper Mac said with great delicacy their house boasted of but few apartments. There was a little room in the L, but in sad disorder. If their honored guest would consent to occupy the sofa that night, and put up with blankets and a buffalo skin, she would confer a favor on Pottle and himself. Jean assented gratefully, very sorry she had caused them so much trouble. Pottle made up the sofa into a comfortable couch, and after filling the stove with coal both the old men went out and left her, going breakfastless the next morning, for she slept late and they did not wish to disturb her.

They fixed up the little room for her the next day, and she sent to Chicago by the train for clot-

ing, for she had money with her. When the package came directed to Mac, the old man said he felt quite like a family man again.

The days slipped by and Jean stayed at Henderson's Station, the old men would have been loth indeed to let her go. They soon saw from her innocent talk she had no object in going East or West —"only to get away to hide," she would tell them; they hoped to keep her with them till the wrong was righted and her people, whom they knew must love and mourn her, would find her at last safe and well.

Dicky liked Henderson's Station. There were wide plains to roam over, prairie dogs to chase, plenty of food and his dear mistress to play with him. Still Dicky dreaded the trains that on their way to the East and West, stopped at the tank to water; the great engines, like black monsters, were terrifying to him, especially the red, evil eye at night, glaring down the track. Jean shared Dick's avoidance of the trains; thus it was that McClure in his distracted search, or his agents, never saw Jean or her dog on their journeys to the East, and, disappointed, back to the West.

Jean was no idler; she knew how to cook, and she set a better table than Mac with less lavish waste. Then she fed the hens, hunted for eggs, kept the house in order and took long rambles across the plains with happy Dick. How quiet those plains were—how burning, in the noonday sun—how still

and monotonous stretching to the horizon's blue line, and never a human figure to break the quiet.

Once in a while a wandering herd of cattle was seen far, far off. Henderson had not been shipping stock lately and the station was lonelier than ever. Of course there was a fitful burst of life when the panting train stopped and when the train men jumped off to talk while they watered the engine; then off they would go and the rumble of the train would die away in an instant. At night the howl of the coyote or fiercer cry of the gray wolf sounded across the space of land setting the dog barking fiercely—that was all.

How different life had become to the old men. Before she came they smoked their pipes and went to bed, often sitting hours without speaking a word. They never saw a newspaper or wanted to see one. They were men of painful past, who had hidden themselves here to rest and be forgotten. Mac was a man of seventy. Pottle was not more than sixty, but his ragged gray beard, his long hair, and his hollow eyes made him seem much older. What his life had been no one ever knew. Jean made a home of the station house, and brightened it with the sunshine of her sweet presence; she unearthed curtains of pretty chintz from one of Pottle's trunks (he had evidently been housekeeping once) stored in the warehouse; she washed them, and curtained the windows, covered the chairs and sofa, and a box she liked to sit on by the low window. How

neat she was, such a little housekeeper, and how childlike and trusting. They were sure from the first she had done no wrong; as they knew her better, they felt she could not do a wrong. They were honorable, these old men, and they never sought to find out her story or her name. Some how from Mac's outspoken admiration they got to calling her "Pretty," and the name seeming appropriate, they settled upon it. It was a great pleasure for them to see her run with her dog over the plains and come back rosy and bright with sparkling eyes.

"Pretty has hardly a shadow in those eyes now," Mac would say, in anxious questioning, but Pottle would answer, taking his pipe in his bony hand:

"Don't be too sure, Mac; that gal's heart ain't healed yit. But she's young, and the life in her can't be crushed. If she could forgit, we could keep her allus; but thar's suthin' back on't all; 'n that," he said, solemnly, "ain't fur us ter bother on; ain't our affair, Mac. It's only fur us to keep an' guard her till they comes for her, whoever they is, an' ef t'want selfish and agin the gal's own happiness, I'd wish they'd be powerful long in comin'."

CHAPTER XIX

ROSE MAKES A REVELATION

Jean left a pitiful note of farewell, this was all McClure found when he went to her room to call her the morning after she had fled. He was nearly frantic; he suspected Miss Wallace was in collusion with her. He sent for detectives and was closeted with them all day. He wanted to keep the matter quiet, for he was determined to find her at any cost. He sought the senator, who was making his preparations for departure. The senator did not know; he had no information to give, nor could he tell, or at least would not tell, what that sentence in her tear-blotted note meant:

"I would disgrace you if I stayed. I am better gone and forgotten."

The senator did not fulfill his threat to Jean. He hated himself, Denver and her; but his hate for her was miserable unsatisfied love. He gave orders if a strange, wild, dark woman sought him at the hotel she should be arrested. She was a dangerous lunatic who had designs on his life. The Senator was going to leave Denver. His trunk was packed and his ticket purchased. While he sat at his dinner one night, a few days after Jean's disappearance

a strange scene was being enacted across the river; and his life was so bound up in those events, that it almost seemed he must have felt some presentiment.

At half-past five one April afternoon, McClure, his wife and Miss Franklin went over to confer with Miss Wallace, whose tearful sympathy meant much to them now they knew she was innocent of Jean's flight. She was not well so they went up to the chamber that looked out on the stone mansion.

"The house is like a tomb" said McClure coughing huskily. "We've eaten nothing all day. I go to find my wife—she is crying over Jean's photograph; I hunt up Miss Franklin, and she is weeping over Jean's letters; then I go to Jean's empty room, where I sit and think of her. I would rather she were dead and at rest than out in the world so strange to her, so hard to an innocent, penniless girl. I can not blame Jean, as some might; for I can see how she went away in dread and fear, trembling and scared, such a tender thing, so fond, so loving, her little heart almost broken—yet her brave, faithful soul telling her—God, how falsely! —it was for our good. The dog's gone, too," he went on, mournfully—"the dog the young fellow gave her. They were so happy, Will and Jean."

They sat and talked of Jean, McClure wandering aimlessly around the room.

"Why, there is the doctor coming," said Miss Wallace. "I did not send for him. Can he know anything of Jean?"

Sam opened the door in answer to the doctor's ring and to his indignant surprise the doctor insisted on going right up stairs.

"Do you know anything of Jean?" asked Mrs. McClure, when the doctor, looking rather flurried came in.

"Not a thing; how should I? She's out of my hands now. Quite well when I last saw her riding with Miss Wallace."

"Then you didn't come here for that," said McClure.

"That I don't understand," answered the doctor, testily. "I came here because Miss Wallace's maid, Rose McCord, told me this morning that I was wanted here at half past five. Of course, if I'm not wanted it is simple enough to go home."

"We're a little upset," said McClure unsteadily; "Jean has left us. She wrote me a note begging me not to look for her, and to forgive her. That's why we are so unlike ourselves. Doctor, we came here to talk to Miss Wallace about her. Miss Wallace loved her too."

"I know that," said the doctor, a puzzled look on his face. "It is a strange thing to me how much Jean looks like Miss Wallace. The same eyes, the mouth, the turn of the chin. I was struck by it from the start."

"How strange," said Miss Wallace faintly.

"She did," cried McClure. "That's why Miss Wallace's face was so familiar to me. A trick of

likeness is a queer thing, though," he sighed.

"Who were Jean's parents? She is not your own child, I think?" the doctor asked.

"The world may know. It will in time; I'll not keep it from you, sir," said McClure, "nor from Miss Wallace. I want you to remember that I did not care about her birth, nor love her the less for it, nor would I hide it, as if I thought it would hurt her. She was the miserable little child left by the Johnsons who were lynched at Desperation Gulch. This is why Curtis came on here, and broke her engagement with his son, and why Jean left our home. She thought, gentle heart, it would disgrace us if she stayed."

"Unhappy Jean," sighed Miss Wallace; "but who could think the less of her? Such a noble, true-hearted girl! Oh, if the past could be buried and no evil hands drag its unhappiness back to life!"

"The past is oftener a comforter than an enemy," said the doctor, thoughtfully. "I do not believe that Jean was those—"

Just then there was a quick knock and before any one could say "Come in", Rose McCord opened the door. Close behind her followed a timid little woman in shabby clothes, who shrank from the surprised looks of the occupants of the room and sat down near the door.

"Well, Rose McCord," said the doctor sternly, "I'd like to know why you brought me here?"

"You will soon find out," Rose answered calmly.

She was dressed for traveling, and had her bonnet on—even her gloves. She laid a shawl and veil on a chair, advancing to a table in the middle of the room. Miss Franklin and McClure were sitting on one side of the hearth, Mrs. McClure and Miss Wallace on the other. The doctor was standing back of Miss Wallace's chair.

"I have come to make a statement," said Rose steadily—"that I wish you to believe and rely on as if I were on my death-bed. I have proofs enough to justify what I shall say; and I want it understood that nothing but genuine pity and admiration for an innocent person wrongfully accused has caused me to tell what would never have been known. I have unlocked my lips, knowing you will hate and despise me, justly, too. I am ready to depart the moment my task is finished, and I trust to your kind hearts that you will not detain me."

"Are you quite yourself, Rose?" cried Miss Wallace, anxiously: "you have been strangely excited and unnatural for a week past."

"Your servant has no right then, to trouble or anguish, Miss Wallace?" cried Rose bitterly.

"Rose, you are cruel. Your life has had no care. Who has been more comfortably housed and cared for than you? I would have given you money enough to make you independent any time you wished to leave me. This, after our life-long friendship, is inexplicable."

"You will understand me better in a few moments, Miss Wallace," said Rose, sadly. "You will see that two women may live together long years, and yet be as far apart in their hearts as if they were strangers to each other. Is there any one here who will write down what I say?"

"I'm a poor penman," the doctor muttered.

"I'm not," asserted Miss Franklin; "I taught writing for years. I can calm my agitation and write what you say plainly, Rose, for I feel that it relates to our poor Jean."

"I will tell you what I want written," said Rose. She looked at Miss Wallace as if gathering courage to go on. "If I were to ask you, Virginia Wallace, to be silent when I am through, to neither blame nor reproach me, but let me go in peace, would you promise it?"

"I will," said Miss Wallace gently. "My poor Rose—our friendship has lasted too long for me ever to feel bitterness toward you."

"You may think different when I am through," Rose went on coldly, "but at all events I have your promise there shall be so scene when my story is told. I will only say a few words about myself," said Rose, calmly, standing a little back from the table; "but I want you to comprehend, if you can, the bitterness and degradation of my life. I was the child of a poor farmer in Ohio, who had a small, unproductive farm, twelve children, and a shrewish, sickly wife. We were bitterly poor, but

I never minded our poverty; all I loved was my books, and the few terms I went to the district school were the happiest days of my life. We lived some miles from the village, and I went there seldom but I remembered the large square white house half hidden by big elm trees where Judge Wallace lived. I remembered seeing a fair-haired lady walking under the trees with a child. I went there with my father once and recollect that she admired me —said I had such black eyes and red cheeks asking father how many children he had, and if he could spare one. Not long after that the lady died, and father went to Judge Wallace. The end of the matter was, I was taken by the judge to be little Miss Virginia's maid. I was taken from my home, my ambition, to be a lifelong servant. The children in the village used to call me Miss Virginia's white slave, and taunt me. My life was an hourly torment, and I hated with bitter hate the child I had to care for. Years went on, and I had a lover, Tom Brooks. He won my love and all that love means, but he dreaded to marry me, for there was ill will even then toward me among the village young folks and he knew he would be ridiculed. They were poor, those farming people; but they were free and independent; they worked for wages, but they were not bound out to serve as I was and they despised me; while I in the fine house, clothed as they never could be, knew I was degraded in their eyes. Then Judge Wallace came West. Tom

Brooks went with the party. He grew careless toward me. He wanted to put off our marriage till he was rich. All this time I hated Virginia Wallace, and one night when we camped on the plains in our wagons, I listened to her and Roy McDonald —another servant the judge had adopted. I heard enough to convince me they loved each other. I knew that here I could revenge myself on her, and make the proud old judge suffer as nothing else could. I held my peace till we were in Denver; then," said Rose, looking into the fire and withdrawing her eyes from Miss Wallace's pale face, "I told the judge his daughter loved Roy MacDonald. There was a dreadful quarrel and the lad was sent away. He joined the army and won good opinions for his bravery. Chance brought him back to Denver and threw the lovers together. They were married and I was a witness. The old clergyman who married them died on his way East, there was nothing to tell of her marriage but myself and the certificate, and we failed when the time came. MacDonald went East to fight against the South and while he was gone a terrible change came over Miss Wallace, she grew sadder and more retiring than ever. She told me what was the matter, but I had guessed it. A woman here at a dinner party roused the judge's suspicions by asking if his daughter was married. He questioned me; I acted as if I knew something and dared not tell. He flew in a rage to his daughter, and found out the truth. I

had written to MacDonald. He came back; but he and her brother met first, and both were killed. Miss Wallace fell in a dead faint. You all know the story; it is whispered even now to new people who come here, by the settlers who knew it, and who delight in raking up old scandals. That night a child was born—a girl. The mother was unconscious, and did not know anything for weeks. The doctor here was present."

"I was. A girl child, and the left foot marked with a red birth mark like a splotch of blood," said the doctor.

"When MacDonald was shot," Rose continued steadily, the glowing eyes on the fire, "he fell at Miss Wallace's feet, and his blood dripped on them and on her dress."

"And the child," cried Miss Wallace, in a hoarse, unnatural voice, great drops of perspiration on her forehead. "It died?"

"You thought so," said Rose. "The doctor knew better, but the judge made him be silent. I gave it to a woman, Mrs. Clark, and she is here," turning to the pale little woman in black who had been a terrified spectator.

"You remember?"

"Yessum," answered Mrs. Clark, in a scarcely audible voice. "My own little baby was dead. Miss Rose brought me this, and paid me enough to make me an' husband comforable for a year. We took it East. Please, marm, if I'd knowed what

had been done—"said the little woman, tearfully looking at Miss Wallace—"I'd brought the little innercent to you, for it was a sweeter baby as I never saw."

"I believe you," said Miss Wallace brokenly.

"The child had the birth-mark, did she not?" asked the doctor.

"Yes sir," said Mrs. Clark.

"Really, madam," said the doctor contritely, "the judge and I believed the child dead. We knew it was given to Mrs. Clark; but a year afterward a letter came to the judge from a Mrs. Johnson, saying the child was dead."

"What did you do with the child, Mrs. Clark?" McClure asked.

"I kep' it a year, Mister," hesitated the little woman; "then I give it 'cordin' to derections of Miss McCord ter a Missus Johnson, her sister."

"I kept Miss Wallace marriage certificate, I denied that the marriage had taken place," said Rose taking up the thread of her story with an unmoved face. "The old Judge believed me; I told Miss Wallace he would not believe I was present at her secret marriage, but I really never mentioned it to him. Well, Mrs. Johnson was my sister. She and her husband came to Denver when the child was some two years old. They staid here but a short time. At the home of old MacDonald, who was grave-digger here then, they saw a girl of twelve, whom I persuaded them to take to the Gulch with

them. Elisha Johnson was the nephew of the old miner in the Gulch known as "Hard Luck Johnson," and came out to work his claim. This old MacDonald was the father of Roy MacDonald, as I found out from the old man, though he never knew Roy was his son. MacDonald was a good-for-nothing man with low tendencies, he deserted his wife in Scotland, and came to this country. Miss Wallace will remember hearing of an unhappy lady who taught music in Rocky Creek, who came to this country in search of her husband. This Mary MacDonald, murdered by the Johnsons, was the child of old MacDonald and a woman whom he had deceived into marriage. I never knew but that she was a decent woman. You all know the story of the lynching and the child's fate. Perhaps you don't know, Miss Wallace, that this child, your husband's half sister, is buried at his feet in the old hill burying ground. MacDonald did it from some fancy. You know this child of the Johnsons, called Jane, her life at the Home here, her adoption by the McClures. She is your own child, Miss Wallace, the girl you have loved as Jean McClure."

There was no sound in the room. They were silent, devouring every word that came from the lips of the strangely calm woman.

"I tried to hate Jean," Rose went on. "She was beautiful and happy. I found out who she was, because Senator Brooks—the Tom Brooks who deceived and fooled me for years, and when he

got rich fled from me—this Brooks loved Jean. I knew he and Curtis were foremost in the lynching of the Johnsons, and I knew Curtis would never let his son marry their child. I thought, too, Brooks would turn from her if he knew. He promised to marry me if I would break off her marriage with young Curtis, I did so; Brooks deceived me, he never meant to carry out his promise. He loved her more than ever, and would have married her in spite of all. No matter how hard I tried, I could not hate the girl, low as I brought her she seemed as pure and sweet as if it never could have been. At last I made up my mind you should know all. Have you written this?" she added, turning to Miss Franklin.

"Yes," sobbed the old lady, "all that is necessary. Mrs. Clark has signed here what she knows, the doctor what he knows, and here is a place for your name."

Rose wrote her name with steady hand; then she turned to Miss Wallace.

"Mrs. MacDonald, "she said quietly, using the new name readily, "here is your marriage certificate. I have hidden it all these years. Here is a bank book; all the money you have given me since I have been a traitor to you is here, save that expended on your child. To comprehend how much I loved Brooks, remember I was the owner of his millions, and I kept silent. If you wish to know how bitterly I hated you and your station, so far

above me, your haughty pride, your ladylike softness and beauty, look back on the misery of your child and your own broken life, sunless and miserable. Live again the long years of sorrow when your father hated you, and when he died unforgiving. I feel no regrets, I say none. The work is done; the tower I built by long years of secret power and evil design is fallen by my own hand. I have redeemed a promise to Jean that I would help her, and I have kept it."

The others would have spoken, but Miss Wallace stopped them. Rose was pinning on her shawl with steady hands; her face coldly calm.

"Will you take some money for your journey, Rose?" Miss Wallace asked gently. She held the old yellow paper in her hand, her marriage certificate, that would have appeased her father and righted her in the eyes of everybody who had believed the stories against her; the paper this woman had hidden, and with fiendish cruelty had forced her to bear disgrace and heart-break so many years.

"Can you with that paper in you hand say this to me?" cried Rose.

"Words could not express the bitterness of my sorrow," said Miss Wallace. "Your own heart shall be your accuser. There is too much misery at your door—too many deaths—too terrible an account—for me to add vain reproaches to it."

"I have no heart, no conscience; I never had," said Rose. "I had hate, revenge and love for one

man. All these passions were for him, for his interests. For him I would still have suffered and sinned. You will find, Mr. McClure, that your Jean is Mrs. McDonald's child. You, no doubt, have noticed her foot. I beg you will not speak. It cannot affect me, nor anything Mrs. McClure might say. The Doctor will help you to prove my words. My sister, Mrs. Johnson, had children, but all died at birth. She was insane at times, and it was better they died. My mother is in a mad-house now, and one of my brothers committed suicide in a fit of despondency. We are a mad race. Lay my crimes to that, if you have pity; if you have none let me be as evil to you as I am—as I have been."

"Where is MacDonald now?" said Miss Wallace, hastily. Rose had picked up her veil and was moving toward the door.

"I do not know. He disappeared years ago, a broken down old man, hating himself, hating everybody, and despised by all. So says Mrs. Julia Mullen, who used to keep house for him, and was a woman of bad reputation; now she has married a rich man—a lucky miner. You know of her—Mrs. Blinn—though I fancy if you asked her of her old companion you would meet with a chilly answer. Nor do I know where Jean is, Mr. McClure, though you are whispering to the doctor I may have made away with her. I know Senator Brooks threatened in his interview with her, that he would tell her story, and people would avoid and hate her, and

the disgrace would react on you who had sheltered her. I think she ran away; and the dog must have followed her, for I saw her shut him in the shed that night to prevent him making a noise, when she crept out of the house, he must have broken loose and followed her."

"I think, Mrs. MacDonald, we ought to keep this woman here. Her crimes should be punished. There must be a redress for you for all the trouble she has caused," the Doctor insisted.

"No, I have caused misery enough," said Miss Wallace, firmly. "My sad story shall not be known in courts of justice; revenge cannot bring the dead to life. Rose carries within her something worse than the law's punishment, I tell her to go in peace. I believe you, Rose; my heart tells me Jean is my child. When we find her, when I kiss her sweet face and shelter her in my arms, all my bitterness to you will be gone. I know we will find her. This new happiness cannot have come to me only to be taken away."

"I trust to your word, Mrs. MacDonald," said Rose, stopping at the door. "Do not blame Mrs. Clark; she did not know." The poor little woman in the shabby dress was sobbing bitterly.

"I had no such idea," said Miss Wallace, kindly, laying a protecting hand on the little woman's shoulder. "I will repay Mrs. Clark for her care and love for my child. She shall never want for I know she was kind to the helpless baby."

"Indeed I were," sobbed Mrs. Clark; "it e'nmost killed me ter give the pretty dear up."

"That is all," said Rose; "you will never see me again; but, Miss Virginia," she went on wistfully, a look of passionate yearning on her face that had suddenly grown haggard and pinched—"when you would loathe me, when you could almost curse me, try to remember my tortured heart. If I was the instrument of murder, why was I made so? Why was the curse of life, and the power to be evil given me? Life is like a forest; some must die to make room for the vigorous growth of the rest. If all trees lived, the oaks would be stunted, the pines warped and twisted to catch the sun, the maples and birch would wither and die. I have seen forests blasted by a growth that was disease. Are not the dead stepping stones? There are places to be filled, and they are filled. If all the good lived this would not be the world, but heaven. Life is a thorny path; those who die at the beginning are not the sufferers; but it will be sunny for some amid all the thorns; there are good as well as evil travelers. It is old, though, as the hills, that both must go their way; the bad bad the good good. The sun breaks through your dark clouds—while I go out into the thicket of thorns where the end is death."

They heard her go down the stairs, call a carriage that had been waiting for her and the rattle of wheels die away. Whither she went they knew not

nor cared. There was left to gather up the tangled threads of life, freed from a grievous snarl. To find with all the force of love and purpose a blue-eyed heart-broken maiden driven into hiding by her shame, the shadow of her birth that they who sought her, knew now was all a heartless lie.

CHAPTER XX

ROSE M'CORD'S REVENGE

The senator had dined. The menu was excellent, the wine delightful. He felt in an easy, meditative mood, disposed to think the world not so bad after all, and to rebuke himself gently for being weak enough to compromise his dignity in the McClure affair. It was a foolish act, and he was too old for foolish acts.

"Besides," said the senator complacently, "I have neglected my business and the affairs of my constituents who elected me to the United States Senate." Here the senator's voice had a tinge of laudable pride. "The United States Senate!" he repeated again. It had a rich, melodious sound. "I go back to-night."

The senator stretched his legs out before the grate in his handsomely furnished private parlor, and leaned back in his easy chair. "Back to-night to Washington at 9:30—and the widow Veasey is undeniably attractive. Though dark women—well, I don't fancy them."

The senator ceased to speak his thoughts aloud, for the remembrance of one dark woman was unpleasant. His eye fell carelessly on the heavy cur-

tain at the window. Certainly one moved. He started in his chair and looked again. This time the curtain did move.

"It is probably Rose," he thought. "She is hidden there; I was a fool not to have thought of it, a great fool. I wonder if she can shoot. She would hit me before I could reach the bell rope. I'll remain cool and use strategy." He looked pensively in the fire, a moment later the curtain was thrown aside and Rose stepped into the room.

"I have waited for you," she said calmly, her face composed, her eyes natural and quiet. "I know you had ordered me to be arrested if I came. You did not know one of the chambermaids here was Mrs. Green, your witness at McClure's. She let me in here with a skeleton key."

"Mrs. Green must be looked after; she is a dangerous servant," said the senator, laying a gentle stress on the last word. "I'll speak of it at the office."

He looked to see if his words had affected her but she coolly sat down in a chair on the other side of the hearth, and began removing her gloves.

"You seem preparing to make a long call, Rose. I regret it, but in an hour or so I take my leave of Denver forever. I can entertain you a few minutes, however, for the sake of 'Auld lang syne.'"

"You are very kind," smiled Rose, equally agreeable. "But I also leave this evening for the East, for Washington, and with you. What was it Ruth said? 'Whither thou goest, I will go.'"

"Don't you think, Rose, that you are making yourself an annoyance," snarled the senator; "I might say nuisance?"

"You forget your promise to me the night I told you who Jean McClure was."

"My dear Rose," said the senator, mildly, "I really must beg your pardon; I had forgotten the whole matter. Now, of course, in the retired station in which your life has been spent, you know little of the great world, and I am forced to tell you what otherwise you might see for yourself, that a public man makes promises by the score without the intention of keeping one. Why, really, in my campaign before my election to the Senate I was rich in promises—I was lavish, prodigal with them; I had multitudes of faithful henchmen bound to me by expectations. I own my election—did I remember the promises? I did not remember even the names of the faithful. I knew they were no longer necessary, and their expectations were a matter of no moment to me. I treated you, Rose, as one of my constituents before election in the McClure matter; I regard you now as a wardworker after election."

"I understand you; I was mad that night, or I would not have believed you. My only excuse was" —Here Rose went up to the fire and held her thin, powerful hands to the blaze—they were cold and trembled slightly—"I loved you. I could have died for love of you!"

"I really pity you, Rose," he said kindly; "I do indeed."

He watched her standing there, a tall, well-shaped woman in black, strong and hardy, with almost masculine breadth of shoulders. He noted her black hair in its tidy knot was thickly streaked with gray; her brilliant color was gone; that she was pale and haggard, and her beautiful, dark eyes sunken. He felt pity for her, and his own unworthiness. He wondered if life would have been happier for both of them if he had been true, and married her in the old days.

"I came to you to-night," said Rose, looking into the fire with steadfast gaze, "knowing all is over—that my hopes were senseless and useless. I know it; you need not tell me. I came to look at you for the last time as one goes to the bedside of a dying friend. I am done with you, Tom Brooks. I have only one duty to perform. Shall I tell you who Jean McClure really is?"

"We have had enough on that subject," replied the senator coldly. "It has no further interest for me."

"But you shall know; I will tell you, for it will be all known to morrow."

She repeated the sad story she had told Virginia Wallace.

"Will can marry her, then," said the senator, gloomily. "Doubtless she is with him."

"No; he is gone, the McClures don't know where;

and Jean is gone, but I know where she is," said Rose, with an air of triumph. "I will restore her to her friends, and tell her and them the story."

"She will be an heiress now to great wealth," cried the senator, eagerly, "so beautiful, her mother a lady—and you know where she is, Rose? Ah, I do remember—she is like Virginia Wallace. Fool! that I never thought of it, and outwitted you. To think as I have all this time she was the Johnson's child, and suffering for years lest she should dispute our fortune. You made a fool of me when you told me Jean McClure's name was Johnson. That revenge should have satisfied you."

"I could have made out to the end she was the Johnson child," said Rose coolly. "What was to prevent her and me from having that mine? I could have proved I was Mrs. Johnson's sister, and Jean her child. The people of Denver would have righted us—even in a border town there is a love of justice in every heart. You and Curtis stole the claim, but you were let do it because no one came forward who owned it. Public feeling would have lynched you two men, if I had brought the child from that Home, told how she was treated there, and showed the scar on her forehead from Curtis' blow. There is always a revulsion of public sentiment after an act of summary justice or injustice. We could have profited by it."

"You're a strange woman," muttered the senator, uneasily.

"I loved you—even now when I, and I only, know where Jean McClure is, I would tell you that you might take her home in triumph, tell her story and, prove it by the papers I have deposited in a bank here. You would rise on my downfall. She might then like you in time for the great good you had brought her."

"Why not have done this yourself?" asked the senator, suspiciously.

"Because I could not bear Miss Wallace's grief and bitter reproaches. I thought to tell the old doctor who knew of Jean's birth, but he is cold and haughty to me. He always suspected I was not true to Miss Wallace. I have given you the facts; tell them now if you will; but without me you can never find the girl, for McClure and a host of detectives have searched in vain."

"How do I know but this is a trap?"

"By this," Rose pulled the curtain aside and threw open the blinds. Down in the street below was a carriage. The driver was holding his horses in readiness to start; on the box with him was a policeman, whose bright buttons and star of authority shone in the light from the gas jet on the corner.

"Go in that carriage with me to a house three miles from the city. We will find her there. You certainly do not fear me with those two men to guard you," said Rose contemptuously.

"No; but; they may be your confederates."

"Get your own policemen then, whoever you will; I will not tell you where the girl is. You would not find her even then. She knows my signals; she trusts me, thinking me her aunt. See, here are our tickets for California; we were going to leave to-morrow."

Rose showed two genuine tickets for the next day.

"You know how easily I can influence people," Rose sneered. "See, I burn these tickets up. I trust you. Give me your ticket east; I will leave to-night on the half-past nine train. You will stay and take Jean to McClure's."

The senator hesitated, but a warm glow of hope thrilled him. If this were true he might win Jean yet. He handed Rose his ticket and looked at his watch. "We must be there and get back in an hour and twenty minutes, or you will be too late," he said.

"It will not take a half hour to go there if the horses are swift. You are armed?"

"Yes," said the senator, coloring.

"I have carried a pistol for years," said Rose; "I suppose to shoot you. See, I lay it on the table. I have no knife concealed about me. Are you satisfied?"

"I still distrust you," answered the senator, "for I don't understand you. I will hire another carriage, send for another policeman, then we will go."

"As you please. Two policemen if you would feel safer."

They passed down the marble stairs to the vestibule, Rose ahead. Brooks had become cautious; but all his mad love for Jean had come back. He would find her and win her this time, before the news should reach Will Curtis. The odds he knew were against him, but there was more excitement in the pursuit. He sent a bell-boy, the freckled one, for a carriage and a policemen; the boy went out and engaged the policeman who had been waiting all the time, but another carriage, giving the waiting man his pay, which the lady had sent.

"They're a queer lot, them two," said the boy to the hackman; "I've seen the gal up here afore him, 'n my eye but they're goin' off in a hack now! These 'ere big-bug senators is hard us'n whan they're out West, like the rest of 'em. It's the light air," finished the small boy with a hideous chuckle. "I'm onto 'em."

The senator drank a glass of brandy, and chatted a few moments with a number of his friends in the rotunda. He told them he had concluded to remain some days longer, and mentioned to the clerk he would stay until the next night, perhaps later. Then he went out to the carriage. He helped Rose in and invited the policeman in also.

"We are going to find a young lady and restore her to her parents," said the senator pompously.

"Miss McCord, tell the driver where to go."

"Capitol Hill, old house near the cemetery," Rose directed; "drive there. Stop in the road; the house

is out on the plains a little way. Avoid noise when you are near it; we don't want to be discovered."

"All right, mum," the driver answered whipping up his horses.

"I suspect the young woman is Miss McClure; she's missin'," said the policeman.

"You are right," said the senator, stiffly, sitting back in gloomy silence.

They drove through lighted streets where the tide of human life ebbs and flows. They passed gay shops and noisy saloons; then turning into a quieter street, went on through the residence portion of the city, ascending all the time, passing handsome mansions, beautiful homes of cattle kings, and miners who had struck it rich, real estate brokers who went up with Denver's rise, and the palatial homes of pioneers who had crossed the plains without a dollar in their pockets, or a second shirt to their backs. Past these, still higher, here and there a house, but mostly wide stretches of barren land. Then in the starlight, the gravestones of the old burying ground gleaming white and ghastly. The resting place of paupers and suicides, the friendless, unknown dead; though a few old families had fenced in lots separated from the motley collection of husks of humanity. A small, dark object stood out in the prairie some distance from the graveyard. The senator, Rose and the policeman left the carriage and walked over the plains. The night was soft, the stars bright, the far off lights of the

city down the hill seemed like a star-lit world below.

"I think," observed the policeman in a melancholy tone, "that I'd kinder skeer the young lady. Folks has a prejerdice agin the perlice, and these buttons kinder acts aggravatin' on them, which ter the innercent oughter not make no difference."

"He is right," said Rose coldly; "you will only frighten Jean; what possible excuse is there for you to introduce a policeman before her?"

"None," from the senator anxiously. "Wait near the door," he cautioned the policeman.

They were at the house now, a little place built of mud, fast falling into decay. Rose listened at the door. There was no sound and no light.

"She can't have gone out," she whispered. "Wait, I'll try the door." It was unlocked. Rose went in. A faint glimmer of light shone through the chinks of a further door. The senator followed, but he stepped back a moment. He seemed strangely fascinated by the bright starlit sky; he looked up, and around the plains, at the dark outline of the carriage and horses, then at the policeman near the door. "Guard this well," he said, in a low tone; "at the least sound from me, rush in."

No. 38 promised but wandered a little way from the door to light a match for his cigar. Afterward he blessed the match that went out and the second that would not burn.

"She is here," said Rose, eagerly. She caught

the senator's arm in her excitement. He rushed forward to the chink of light. Something fell, a horrible sound like a thousand thunder claps blended in one awful peal—followed by a glare like all the lightnings of heaven in one dread flash—a feeling of flaming fire—a roaring of mighty oceans—a sudden rise of wall and roof—an earthquake—a sense of falling, falling, of terrible physical torture—of nightmare, a dream leading on through all the horrors of a fabled hell—then a glimpse of a woman's face; a dark, glowing face with great luminous black eyes, coming from a sea of blood; then a woman's voice ringing through all the uproar:

"If I may not live with you, I can die with you. In death we are not divided!"

A sense of being clutched in a fierce passionate grasp, of more fire, more roaring, more thundering, then black, black night.

It took a second, the half of a second, but it meant eternity.

No. 38 had no idea what it was. He did not know he could fly, but he recollected when the crowd brought him to consciousness, he had been near the adobe house, now, he was much nearer town, and all bruised and cut.

The hackman knew more of it. He remembered distinctly he was sitting holding his horses and looking over to the house. The gentleman and lady had just gone in. He saw a flash of light come from one room, like a lamp pulled down from

the bracket. He could not tell just how, for there was a flimsy curtain over the window: a half second after that there was a terrible crash, and the whole house flew up in the air in a burst of flame. The earth was torn up all around it; a piece of mud struck him, or he fell from the shock, and his horses ran away.

This was his story when he was restored to consciousness. A farmer living beyond the graveyard brought in two lame and battered horses the next day remarking the carriage would make good kindling wood.

After the explosion an immense crowd gathered at the spot, coming in teams from the city, with aggrieved residents in the vicinity who had broken windows and crockery to account for. When the chief of police came the crowd respectfully waited for him to investigate. He was a paid officer, if there were any more explosions in the fragments of the hut it was his duty to find out. After some reasonable delay he went up to the smoking ruins; nothing there—nothing to tell the story.

Then the hackman came to life and asked for his team.

Some one pointed to the prairie with a gloomy air, and one man on horseback said a maddened span of horses, dragging something, had passed him two miles back of the cemetery.

"Hack's gone ter flinders," said a fat man consolingly; "horses probably broke their necks."

"Where's the man and woman?" asked the hackman, staggering to his feet moping the blood from his face.

"Man and woman! Was there anybody there?" shouted the crowd.

Then the hackman told his story, and No. 38 being recalled to active existence, told his, and how trying to light that match had saved his life.

"The woman had made the man believe some young lady was there," said the officer. "The girl's been missing a day or so; name blowed clean outer my head. The senator was a friend of her family, and come here ter git her. They went into the house, he tellin' me to come ef he made a sound, like he feared some trap. Then there come that explosion. I found you here, and me here."

"The senator who?" said the chief of police. "Brooks," shrieked a shrill, childish voice, and the freckled bell-boy made his appearance. He told the story of the mysterious woman's visits to the senator at the hotel, and immediately became a person of consequence, and was taken aside by groups of men and interviewed. At each recital his story became more weird and startling, until at last he ventured on his own sage opinion of the matter and previous predictions, that something uncommon was up. Then a neighbor recollected for a week past a dark woman had had boxes hauled into the house. Then general belief was the boxes contained furniture, and she was a disreputable per-

son; indeed all the ladies had resolved never to call upon her. "Having all her things boxed, so one couldn't see what she had, and moving way out here!" from a lady with a shawl over her head, hanging on the arm of a small man in large overshoes.

"I hauled them boxes," said a red-haired man. "Lord a marsy, ef I'd knowed wot was in 'em."

"You was purty nigh crossin' the range that time," said the fat man, who delighted in contemplation of the melancholy possibilities of life.

While several of the residents of the neighborhood were telling their experience, an old negro came dashing up on a plump black horse, fiery and wild as a colt in the excitement. He desired information, and the bell-boy, delighted with a new listener, came close to the big horse to tell the story.

"Massa Brooks!" cried Sam. He had ridden in hot haste from Highland, sent by his mistress to find out what the explosion was. "Fore God, I b'lieve dat woman was Rose McCord."

A yell came from the chief of police's party, who were searching with torches up by the grave-yard. The crowd rushed in that direction, Sam and his black horse in the midst of them.

The papers teemed with eulogies of a great, dead man. The senators had a day's holiday; a chair was decked with crape; there were resolutions passed and speeches made testifying to departed worth.

There were memorial services in a city in honor of one of its citizens, whom the state had made a senator. Great lumber mills were locked all day, the workmen sat idle, smoking their pipes, and thinking of the owner who was, his millions and his death. There was no weeping among the women, nor sorrow among the men; they had given their work for the wages of the time, neither better nor worse than elsewhere, nor had they any deed of kindness to remember.

What was that lying on the ground, blackened, burnt and bleeding? Not a human creature? A woman, unrecognizable, unknown, save by the great dark eyes that had been saved somehow, and now in the ghastly head looked upward, with glassy calmness, into the horrified faces of the crowd.

"It was Rose McCord," whispered Sam. "De Lord have mercy on her!"

That all who knew her prayed, when the unsightly body was buried in the hill cemetery, without mourners, without one heart to weep over her.

Further on there was another something; this was what the papers eulogized, the senate mourned, and a city decked its capitol in black, hung its flags at half-mast, and followed with stately splendor to a magnificent mausoleum. Draw back, in loathing, crowd! Lift it with shuddering horror. Sickening, scorched fragment of humanity, once a man! What of his millions, what of his fame, what of his love?

For love of a girl! As a careless boy follows the will-o-the-wisp, he followed the magic light of Jean's presence—to his terrible death. Oh, retribution of time! The Johnsons might turn in their graves on the rocky hill, in the pine-clad gulch; for the little child left orphaned and alone in the cabin that fearful night, had, guiltlessly, wrought revenge on their murder, and this blackened corpse was the offering of fate for crime and lawless greed.

CHAPTER XXI

DICKY MAKES A DISCOVERY

It was August at Henderson's Station, a burning, sultry time, when the plains were great fields of scorched grass that fairly smoked in the heat. The sun was brassy and bright, and fierce; the pitch oozed from the boards of the station house and warehouse, and dripped in resinous tears. The very trains seemed hot and tired, and the passengers were red-faced and dishevelled. The dust was terrible; it rose in clouds everywhere; it followed the train like a trail of smoke; it rode the afternoon's hot wind, and whirled along in clouds; it idly followed every footstep on the prairie—little complaining puffs of dust that were lying in wait to be stirred. Rain,—there had been none, for weeks. Everywhere bloomed gay flowers of the plains, and the blossoms of the cactus whose touch is torment. Colorado in her least lonely mood.

"It's durned hot," Mac would say gloomily, following the sun around the station, keeping prudently in the shade. "Hot," Pottle would ejaculate, "hotter'n h—." He would not finish the sentence, but would glance miserably into the station-house. They tried to make it cool, but how in that parched

desert? Jean, just come back from the border land of death, would never get well, they thought, with heart break and sad silence.

Jean had grown strangely weak the first of July. She ceased to run with Dicky on the prairie. She ceased soon to feed the hens, or do her household tasks; then she stayed in her little white bed, as white as its sheets, and then she ceased to eat. One day they found her raving wildly, screaming strange names to them, and calling for people they little suspected knew her. Then Mac went down to the next station on the road and brought back a motherly German woman settled there on a ranch. This good soul could not speak a word of English, but she was an excellent nurse and loved Jean, who, in her delirium, mistook the stout, motherly soul for Mrs. McClure and called her "mother," making her kinder than before. When August came Jean's mind was clear again, she knew her friends and smiled on her nurse; yet she lay, white and helpless like a broken lily, never to bloom again.

"Mrs. Kohler's got to go home to-morrow," said Mac, one sultry afternoon, as he and Pottle sat in front of the station waiting for the 3:30 train to come along.

"What kin we do fur Pretty, then?" asked Pottle. "It breaks my heart to see her lyin' thar with a death look on her face. She'll never git well."

"Wonder who that Will was, now, she raved about!" said Mac, slowly, settling his tobacco in

his pipe with his finger. "Some one; brother perhaps."

"Her feller," Pottle muttered gloomily.

"I thought of that, young things like Pretty generally have a lover, and I'm glad on it; it's natural. I've been married myself. My first wife was a lady —"he sighed and pushed his hat back on his head. "A lady. 'Taint pleasant to a man of seventy to think he's a rascal that oughter be hung."

"No, 'taint," said Pottle.

"I'm thinking of a move," said Mac.

"Not ter leave the stashun?" cried Pottle in alarm.

"No, only for a day—one trip up on the 3:30 train and back to-morrow, leaving you to do double duty. I'll come down on the first train."

"What for?"

Mac sunk his voice to a deep sepulchral whisper. "I'm going for her folks; I know of them. I lived in Denver a good while; I know everybody. Lucky McClure is one of the richest men there, made it in Coyote Gulch. Fine old fellow; I saw him go by here in the cars not long ago. He'd been East looking for her; she's their adopted child, I've heard of it. Then that Miss Wallace she's raved about lives in Denver; I know her, buried her fellow. He was shot by her brother. That Rose McCord, too, is Miss Wallace's servant. She came up to the grave-yard prying around, then she used to visit Mrs. Mullen, a lady I boarded with in

Denver—" finished Mac, with a slight, hesitating cough.

"That's a good idee," sighed Pottle. "'Taint right fur us ter keep the gal here; it will kill her. She's too bright an' beautiful ter be sot 'way out here in the solitude of a railroad stashun; an' I've no doubt but they're searchin' everywhar fur her. Go, Mac, by all means."

"I'll slip off in these old clothes," said Mac, with much admiration of his own shrewdness; "she'd suspect if she see me fix up."

"That's so. Good luck ter ye. Thar's the train," Pottle shouted, running to the switch.

Mac jumped aboard and the train whizzed on.

"Going for supplies to Denver," Mac explained to the conductor, and, as he was well known, this was a passport.

The German woman retired to her room to sleep. Pottle made signs to her that he would look after her charge. He went into the sick room. Jean was dressed in a queer flower silk gown Pottle had in one of his trunks. He explained it was Chinese, he had brought it thinking some day he might have a wife to appreciate its beauty. It was of blue silk embroidered in white and tied at the waist with cord and tassel. Her long golden hair fell in curls about her shoulders, and her little white hands were almost lost in the wide sleeves of the wrapper.

"Wheel me out of doors, please, uncle Pottle,"

she said so wistfully, he could not refuse. He moved her into Mac's big chair and wheeled it out into the back shed that looked out on the plains. He left her in the doorway running out every few minutes to see if she wanted anything.

Dicky stayed around for awhile, glad to see his mistress out again, but by and by a jack rabbit struck his fancy and he started in excited chase. Jean would have called Pottle to bring the dog back, but she heard the tick of the telegraph and knew that there was a message occupying him. So she leaned back with a helpless sigh while faithless Dicky disappeared in the distance.

Dicky ran on, but the jack rabbit ran faster, and then darted into a hole. Dicky was tired and heated, and he lay down to rest; then he heard the sound of hoofs; there was a cloud of dust coming, pretty soon a small sorrel horse came galloping across the plain. Dicky considered it a wise thing to ascertain the strength of the enemy before flight. All the fur on his body stood up as he stiffened his legs and barked.

The rider of the sorrel horse was a cowboy, a handsome young man with big, dark eyes, close cut hair, and skin swarthy as a Mexican's.

"Hello, a dog," said this young man, checking his broncho suddenly; "a brown setter marked with white—by all that's holy—." He leaned forward. "Dicky, Dicky," he called.

Dicky was making active preparations for imme-

diate departure, but he stopped and hesitated.

"Dicky, you rascal," called the young man, dismounting and going toward the dog. Dicky went through alternate maneuvers of advance and retreat; finally he did remember, and rushed up to his former master with joyful barks and doggish caresses.

"It is Dick, fat and well cared for, and out here. What can it mean? could he have been lost off a train? They'd have kept him at the station. I'll follow him," the cowboy said, mounting his horse.

Dicky, after sundry antics, set off across the plains toward the distant station with the air of a herald of good tidings. Will spurred his broncho and followed. He saw the dog rush in at the open door of a long low building; so he rode by the house and tied his horse back of the big warehouse. He went slowly up to the open door where the dog had gone; he meant to ask an explanation. As he went around the corner of the house his shadow darkened the sunlight before the door. There was a vison in blue with pale face and yellow hair. His Jean, his lost love was there!

He stopped utterly bewildered. There was Jean, there was the dog he had given her, panting by her side; but how came she here in that strange, foreign dress, so white and ill? What could it mean? He threw his sombrero down and went up to her.

"Will," she said faintly.

"My Jean!" he cried, with a break in his voice.

He knelt down beside her, taking her frail hands in his brown rough ones that hard work had given a manly strength and ruggedness.

"I cannot understand it," he said. "The dog was out there, I followed him—I find you here in this dress and sick. What does it mean?

"I ran away," stammered Jean, the ghost of a blush on her pale cheeks.

"Tell me all," he said, holding her hands closer. Then she told him why she left, all the sad story of her flight, how the old men had cared for her and given her a home, and how she had been so near death, she thought she would never be well again.

"You will now, Jean," he said eagerly. "Dicky went with you, the dog I gave you—noble old fellow—and you alone at night in Denver, down in that place and riding in a cattle-car. My delicate Jean, I thought you timid and fearful, but you are a heroine—a first-class one. Dear little Jean! You must have suffered so! I could crush that tiny hand in my big strong one."

"You are changed, too," said Jean, shyly; "you've grown so brown, so strong-looking and brave. You are a man now, and there is such a stern look in your face I am almost afraid of you."

"I have led a wild life," he said, with shame, remembering his recklessness, and downward course. "I did not care; I had lost you. I wanted to end life, and end it quickly. I left the herd last night,

I was so unhappy. I was going to Texas. It is worse there, and I thought I might find the end. Fate led me here, Jean; something led me to you, just at a moment when I felt all goodness leaving me, and only the spirit of daring and folly uppermost."

"It was Dicky led you to me," said Jean, with a happy little laugh that echoed.

"Jean," he cried passionately, "you will not die; you will live for me, my Jean, my love!"

He gathered her in his arms, raining kisses on her lips, her hair, her forehead; and she clung to him, forgetting in that sweet moment of meeting all the sorrows of their separation. There should be no more dark secrets of the past to part them. Love is love—in poverty or riches, in crime or virtue, in palace or hovel, in sin or law—love is love, the wide world over!

Pottle crept softly out and looked in from the house door. He saw the young couple unseen by them, and went back to the station house.

"Her feller's come by the looks on't," he muttered sagely.

The good frau went home that night, for her husband came after her on a hand-car. She kissed Jean good-by, and told her in German—which Jean knew and thought particularly delightful—now the young lover had come she would get well soon.

Pottle surpassed himself in the supper he got. With a gloomy countenance he fed the broncho and

with a vicious twist he wrung the neck of his best pullet as a sort of sacrificial offering to Jean's lover. This was the way jealousy and regret affected him; otherwise he relaxed from his usual silence and became quite talkative. After supper, where Jean was rosily happy but shy, Pottle called the young man into the telegraph room and shut the door.

"Who be you?" he asked concisely.

Will explained, and Pottle extended a singularly cold, bony hand. It felt like a fish. Will shook it heartily, shook it again, and finally laid it down. Pottle seemed rather glad to get it, looked thoughtfully as if projecting another shake, thought better of the idea and put his hand in his pocket.

"Cowboy by trade?" he said.

"Temporarily," said Will.

"Oh, temporarily—rily—quite a word," Pottle repeated thoughtfully. "She's told yer 'bout us?"

"Yes, God bless you," said Will.

"Whether I b'lieve in the doctrin' or not, 'taint much diff'rence," said Pottle; "it's a kind wish; same ter yer! She's been sick."

"I know it, but she will be better now."

"Shudden't wonder, shudden't wonder a mite. Wal, here's a telegram. My partner Mac," he went on, mysteriously, not disposed to break the secrecy of their companionship, "is gone ter Denver ter tell her folks. She come here in April, got sick in July, and we found out then who her folks was, and Mac's gone ter git 'em."

"Just as happiness was at my door, just as she was mine, to lose her again," groaned Will.

"They ain't agin ye?" asked Pottle, much moved.

"They will never let me marry her."

"Sho, now, jest look here," Pottle cried, with growing excitement; "I guess me an' Mac's took ker o' her this four months bein' fathers to her, and we've got a word to say, an' ef yer want a friend in slopin', I'm thar."

"Thank you," said Will, gratefully. "I know you mean well, but nothing can help us. An old story of the past, not our fault, separates us forever. I must not stay, it is better to go before they come. Give me some brandy—I'm heart sick, it will help me. Bring my horse, Pottle, I'll ride off and never see her again. That is the best way."

"Young man," said Pottle, bracing his lank form against the door, "yer hain't goin'; you'll stay here an' face 'em an' stick by yer gal. Ef you'd heered her callin' fur ye—she bein' outer her head, an' givin' way all she'd kep locked in her poor little heart, tearin' her hair, moanin', an' cryin', you'd never leave her. I tell yer, it will be her death; she ain't no common nater, an' she don't love in no common way. Drinkin' eh, an' brandy? Yer look as ef you'd hed too much uv it in times past. That's the poorest way to drown a sorrer. I done it; look at the failure I am. The lecturers sez thar's pizen in the cup. I don't know but they're right, fur it saps the manliness outer a man, an'

makes him a beat an' a bum, a human wreck on the shores of time."

"You are right," said Will, sadly. "Read me the telegram."

"Don't say much, only this: "I'll be down ternight, special train. Keep Jean up—I mean Pretty. Gladdest folks yer ever see. Hip, hip, huroor. 'Welcome the coming, speed the going guest.'"

"He's a great han' fur po'try," said Pottle, admiringly. "He'd put it in a will if he'd ennything to leave. Them folks must have paid fur that telegram. What'll we do?"

"I think we had better not tell her until they come, they might be delayed. I'll sit with her, and give her an idea that something is going to happen, to prepare her for their arrival."

Will's heart was sad when he went back to Jean, but he sat beside her sofa, and told her she must keep awake, for old Mac might bring Mr. McClure. Jean lay back on her pillow, the big tears rolling down her cheeks.

"Dear love," Will whispered, "let us be happy now. We can not tell what time will bring—not even a day, an hour—but we can be happy now."

Jean smiled a pitiful little smile, and laid her soft cheek close to his. The time passed swiftly to them; but how long it seemed to lonely Pottle waiting for a train, and how long it seemed to the anxious hearts on that train, as the red headlight gleamed through the darkness, and the wavering

line of lighted windows followed like a trail of fire as the special sped across the plains.

CHAPTER XXII

A HAPPY REUNION

The car was a comfortable one and the party in it right pleasant to look at. Mac was there in great glory, the hero of the hour; Mrs. McClure, careworn, and somewhat thinner than of yore, sat beside him, while facing him were two ladies, eagerly listening to every word he said, and every word was, of course about Jean. Miss Franklin sat up straight and dignified as usual but had frequent recourse to her handkerchief. Mac's remarks and his glances were chiefly directed toward the other lady, who, beautiful still, despite gray hair and deep lines of sorrow, kept her eyes on his face with absorbed interest. She neither wept nor spoke a word. She seemed frozen into suffering silence; in her deep blue eyes a look of yearning expectancy, and her hands clasped tightly in her lap.

McClure was sitting some distance back, with a white-haired old gentleman, in a state of such restless excitement he could hardly take time to answer the old man's questions. He wandered up and down the car, on the platform at either end, and looked out of every window in succession.

"What a journey my poor daughter must have

had," said the old gentleman, "across these plains with her child and her unfeeling husband."

"It was a terrible journey then," said McClure, stopping and mopping his forehead. "How hot the night is! If we could only find Will, Captain Hawley. When I wrote you I thought he was with you. I hoped he would find Jean. I told you her history to tell him, that he might know there was no barrier between them. I never dreamed she was within a few hour's ride of me. God grant we may find the lad."

"Amen," said the captain. "Your letter came to me just after I had heard from a New York friend the lad had left his father; then your letter told me why. I got interested in the lost young girl, and determined to come out but, Mr. McClure, it's quite a journey for an old man over eighty. Well, well, I thought, too, Will was out here. I don't think he went far from the girl he loved. I know I'd have hung around if it had been me. I was a lad of spirit, sir."

I'll warrant you were," said McClure. "I said to Bid—Mrs. McClure—when you came here, and so old, and such a strange journey, that you were a man of mettle—true gold, sir, and no alloy; the lad is like you."

"I'm pleased he is," exclaimed the captain. "My daughter was a noble woman, but I was bitterly angry with her for not leaving Curtis. I may have been unjust. As I get older and nearer the grave I

think of it more. I know that I was unjust."

"After all, the Bible says a man must leave all his kin for his wife," said McClure," and I suppose it's the same law for the wife. Yet it was terribly hard for Will's mother."

McClure wandered down the aisle, then to the rest of the party. Mac had stopped to get his breath.

"I wonder now," McClure asked him, "if you ever heard of a John MacDonald? You were no doubt a pioneer here. You ought to know everybody. His son was this lady's husband," laying a kindly hand on Miss Wallace's shoulder.

"Miss Wallace thought I was him, but I knew him well; we was partners in the grave-digging business. He was not any good; he went down hill early, giving free rein to all the bad in him, and he was killed," said Mac steadily, "in a fight at Bill Bowen's saloon in 1876."

"Where is he buried?" said Miss Wallace eagerly.

"I thought you'd ask that, ma'am. I remember your caring for the body of—" Mac went on with a little break—"the young man, your husband, but which I supposed to be a friend. He was buried, if you recollect, with a gravestone; but I reserved a space for him and fixed it up a little more than the rest of them that died with their boots on and hadn't the means to bury them."

"I remember it well, said Miss Wallace; "that dreary grave-yard on the hill, and you buried the child near the lot I had fenced in."

"Right to his feet, ma'am," Mac answered strangely moved, "pitiful like, as if looking for his protection. They both seemed lone ones the world had trampled on."

"Mrs. MacDonald had the little grave inclosed in the iron fence she had put around the lot," Miss Franklin added; "and put up a pretty stone with these words: 'Mary MacDonald, a child martyr;' that was all, was it not, Mrs. MacDonald?"

"How little I could do for her, I, who had not known of her till she had long been dead! Yet she was Roy's—my husband's—half sister, and that miserable man who basely deserted his wife in Scotland was Roy's father, and this poor child's. How one man's crime follows a host of innocent beings, and brands them with shame and sorrow to the grave! I never hear of a man who sins but I pray God to have pity on his children. The wretched old man, you did not tell us where he is buried? I would pay him respect, as my husband's father—my Jean's grandfather."

"Jean's grandfather," muttered Mac, deep lines in his wrinkled forehead, his withered hands trembling in his lap. "So he was, so he was!" He came to himself with a start. "The grandfather of her that came to me for shelter, her with her hair of gold and her great, sad blue eyes, so dainty and fine, a lady in every gentle look and word. He's buried, Mrs. MacDonald—I being used to call you and think of you as Miss Wallace, which will ex-

plain how the name of MacDonald comes unhandy to me—he's buried below the burying-ground proper; in the potter's field, they call it, midst rows of graves, none of them marked, and he's confused with them, all being crowded together in a rank, weed-grown place with murderers and jail-birds, pest-house patients, and the unknown that came out here in the early days, men without home or country; there he is, and no one will know his neighbors, or where he's lying, till the last day, when he'll rise to get his sentence. That's his last resting-place, and I think it best that he lies unknown. I was his friend, ma'am, and knowing him at the last, I saw he was repentant, worn out with sorrowing and regret, when it was too late. He would like to be left there quiet like and forgot."

"I am sorry," said Miss Wallace. "I had hoped to find him alive. He should have had a home with me and every care. Even now, so near her, I fear something will intervene—that I can never see her and tell her I am her mother, that these Johnsons were not her kin, that her young lover shall come back and Jean be happy Jean again.

"There's the station light," said Mac, excitedly. "Nothing can help your finding her unless she be dead, and that could not be for Pottle would have sent word. She's pale and sick-looking, so don't be shocked when you see her; I think her little heart is breaking—that it was more sickness of mind than of body. It will upset her to have you

all come. Shall I go tell her and break the way? She'll expect me."

"Yes, go," said McClure, "we will wait here. Tell us when we may come."

Mac went along the track and softly opened the station-house door. The train was some rods from the house, on a switch. Pottle had heard the noise, and was waiting for him.

"Be they thar?" he asked softly.

"Waiting in the car. They sent me ahead to prepare her."

"He told her they was comin'," said Pottle, mysteriously.

"He? Who?"

"Her feller," Pottle explained, with keen relish of his important position and his news. "The dog run off on the plains, way off there," (pointing indefinitely behind the station). "He seen the dog, knowed it, followed it. I heered a noise, an' seen 'em huggin' of each other—name's Will—cowboy temporarily." The last word with modest pride; it was a new acquisition to a limited vocabularly. It rather astounded Mac, and for a moment the latest news exceeded his own.

"Where are they?"

Pottle pointed a lean finger to the inner room. Mac softly opened the door. He saw Jean on the sofa, and a young man standing by the window, looking out into the night. The young man turned when the door opened.

"Have they come?" he whispered. Mac nodded.

"Jean," Will said softly. "Dearest, be brave, your father has come."

The blue eyes opened slowly as she gazed about her in a dazed, helpless way; then she turned to Will:

"You will not leave me again; never again? Promise me before they come; my life hangs on a thread now."

"Never, Jean," he said firmly. That past was not of our making; our young lives, our happiness shall not be blasted by it."

"If when I am well, and the old, sad horror comes back, I would not marry you, you will not think hardly of me. You will be a dear brother to the end?"

"Whatever you will, Jean," answered her lover bravely.

"Have you no word of welcome?" Mac asked gently, his face pained and sad.

"Dear, kind Uncle Mac, you did what you thought was right. It was right, perhaps; but I can only bring sorrow on them all."

"Shall I tell you a little story," said Mac, standing at the foot of the sofa, a sad story full of misery and sorrow, where lives have been wrecked and warped, and deaths have come crowding fast? A story with a happy ending, like fairy tales, Pretty?"

"I don't understand," said Jean, looking at him with wide, wondering eyes. "You speak so differ-

ently; you look so pale and excited. Does it concern me?"

"You and the young man here that you love."

"Then tell me quickly."

"In Scotland, years ago there was a bad man named MacDonald. He deserted a beautiful, good wife, and a little son, and ran away to America, where he could be as lawless as he pleased. Afterward when her father died and left her penniless—for this bad man had laid the foundations of her father's ruin—she came to America to look for her husband. She may have loved him still, or she may have hoped he would provide for her and the child. She drifted around in the new country and finally died in a little Ohio town leaving her son alone in the world. Judge Wallace adopted this son—"

"Miss Wallace's father?" asked Jean.

"Yes. He had also taken a girl for his daughter's maid, Rose McCord, an evil-hearted woman. After some years the judge migrated to Denver, and took all with him, including his daughter Virginia, a girl of sixteen. By and by the daughter loved this MacDonald—Roy was his name—and, with Rose McCord for witness, Virginia and Roy were married secretly, for the Judge had forbidden Roy to his home. In a year a child was born to Virginia; the night of its birth Roy came back, and Virginia's brother shot him dead, and was shot himself by Roy. Virginia was a witness and fainted and they told her her child was born dead. But

Rose McCord gave it to a woman going East, a long journey then, and in a year made the judge believe the child was dead. Then Rose's sister, Mrs. Johnson, took the child—

"Mrs. Johnson!" cried Jean, springing up. "Go on, go on; for pity's sake, tell me quickly, tell me the rest."

"This Johnson woman had no children; she took the babe as her own and in a year brought it back to Denver; after that," said Mac, struggling with his painful emotion," you know the rest. You were that child, Pretty; you are Miss Wallace's lost child."

"Take me to her," sobbed Jean, forgetting all else. Take me to her, my mother, my mother! That awful woman was nothing to me, nor the shame of being her child. Oh, I can not believe it. The sweet lady I loved—so beautiful in her lonely house—so sad, so good to me! Oh, my heart tells me it is true. She clasped me in her arms that night; take me to her."

"She is here," said Mac softly. He went out, and Will slipped after him. Pottle had summoned them from the car, and Miss Wallace was waiting in the station room. She went in then and Jean's sweet voice, cried with a pathos they had never heard before.

"My mother, my mother; oh, my beautiful mother!"

They closed the door; for the woman who had found her child had a grief too deep for words, a joy too sacred for witnesses.

"You here?" sobbed Mrs. McClure; "Will, my Jean's lover, and you found her first."

"Will here," said McClure, delightedly. "Will Curtis here when we've hunted everywhere for him? But where should he be but here with his Jean? Hurrah, Will! There's Miss Franklin crying again. She's cried a steady weep ever since Jean went away. She's stood by us all, God bless her! No more tears, no more sorror; our Jean, our Will, are found."

The little old man capered around in his joy, hugged his wife, and hugged Miss Franklin, ruffling her dignity but never her temper; slapped Mac's shoulder till it ached, and wrung Pottle's hand till it lay like a limp fish by his side, and put him to much secret anxiety for fear McClure would wring it out of use in telegraphy, or take it away as a gory trophy.

"There, I forgot him," said McClure, suddenly. "He's outside, looking at the plains—seems fairly daft over them because his daughter crossed them in a wagon; said they're bigger than the ocean. I'll get him."

"Who is he?" Will asked.

"It's your dear grandfather, the Capen," Mrs. McClure explained. "Come way out here after you; and wasn't goin' back till you was found, if he died here; said you was all that was left of his race, and he was bound to find you. Alexander writ him about all the fuss, an' that Brooks, an' all." She told

him then of Brooks' tragic fate, while McClure's voice was echoing outside calling for "Capen! Capen!"

Pretty soon that fine old sea-captain came, straight as an arrow in spite of eighty years, with white hair framing his weather-beaten old face.

"So you're Will Curtis?" he said, surveying Will, who stood shy and abashed in his rough suit. "Ben a pirate, hey?"

"No; a cowboy."

"Wanter know," said the old man, much delighted. "Read about 'em in the papers—wild lot, eh? You've got a good face, your mother's looks; my girl's boy couldn't help but be a good one. Give me your hand, and rough it is," went on the pleased old man, "like a sailor's; worked hard, eh? Set down here and tell me what you did and if all the yarns I've read are true—revolvers in your belt, and cartridges—and fought Indians, eh, Will; fought 'em, eh?"

"A few."

"Kill 'em, eh?" in some excitement.

"No, not many. A number of roving Indians stole our cattle; we chased them and broke up the band, and got our stock back. I was hurt here," (pulling up his sleeve and showing a scarce healed wound). It wasn't bravery that made me keep on the chase when the rest turned back. It was the hope I would be killed. They were twenty to our ten, and had better horses, though their's were not

so fresh. We ran them down. I went into it to get killed; I failed. You know why life wasn't much account to me," he said, turning to Mrs. McClure.

"You dear boy " she smiled.

"A fine lad," said the Captain. "Will, can you throw a lariat? Now really! Well, you shall show me how. Gosh, I'll try it myself. I can do any work about a ship, and I guess I can master that trick of a rope."

Will told him of a cowboy's life, and much excited the old captain exclaimed:

"I have it, Will; I brought my money out here for you; you shall have a ranch and cattle; you shall be the cattle king of the West. Blast it! I came out here; I saw young fellows riding around the streets; I asked, 'Who's that?' 'Oh, English—owns cattle here—has a ranch—comes into town to have a good time—making lots of money. Those English big-bugs send their youngest sons here to get 'em in business and make 'me rich land owners.' 'Where's our American boys?' I yells, mad at the idea. 'Hanging around club-houses in New York and being walking fashion-plates at Newport and abroad,' some one says. So's Will I thought; he'll be one of 'em. I've kept track of you; heard you were at Yale, and stroke-oar—'Base ball and fiddlesticks and fresh-water navy,' I says; I've no use for that lad. I'll leave my money to a sailors' home, to that noble Sailors' Snug Harbor on Sta-

ten Island.' But I came out here to hunt you up. I find you a man—a big, brown, brawny fellow in clothes bristling with ammunition, loaded down for blockade-running. I find you a cowboy, a cow puncher ain't it? the beast outside that tried to kick the life out of me, a broncho, a bucking broncho, eh, Will? Bill, I'll call you—Denver Bill, wild boy of the plains, eh?" poking him in the ribs. 'One American boy shall be a cattle king; one American boy shall have cattle on a thousand hills. I'll camp down, too, blessed if I don't. With all these oceans of land I don't want any salt-water oceans."

While he spoke the door opened, and Jean came out leaning on her mother's arm.

"Dear father and mother McClure—my father and my mother always—take me home again and forgive your Jean," she said, with her own happy smile.

Forgive her! Those faithful, loving hearts! They kissed her and cried over her, and Miss Franklin—a perfect Niobe—came forward for her share of the welcome, then the old Captain made his best bow.

"I'm Will's grandfather, miss," he said, with much state. "He will be my heir. I hope the match will now be as satisfactory to your mother and Mr. and Mrs. McClure as it is to me."

"My mother," laughed Jean, "my two mothers. Oh, you dear old man." Whereupon she kissed him on both cheeks.

"Well, well, I'm sure," he said, heartily, as he repaid them with interest. "You're a fine sick girl, eh? Look at the roses in those cheeks! Stand up by her, Will; let's see how you look. It does my old eyes good. Ain't they a picture?"

"You've forgotten somebody," said Jean.

"Who?" asked McClure.

"Why, Dicky. He crawled under the bed in the back room, so much noise frightened him. And he brought Will back to me, the dear thing!"

We must not neglect Dicky, then," said the captain. "If money's an object to him, why now—but what on earth should make a reasonable being crawl under a bed."

"A bone would be more of an object to him," said Jean, with a merry laugh; she was all smiles now. "He's my dog, that Will gave me—the dearest dog in the world."

After sundry hoarse growls and scuttling withdrawals, Dicky was brought out, and he shortly made himself as overwhelmingly familiar as he had been retiring.

"Engineer wants ter know ef yer' goin' back ternight?" inquired a surly voice at the door.

"We must," said McClure; "we made all arrangements to return; and you, Mr. Pottle and Mr. Mac, will go with us. The house is big enough—I'll build a house for you. Don't think I'm going to forget, I'll make you two bless the day you took Jean and cared for her."

"We couldn't leave," said Mac soberly. "Pottle has to be here; we're old chums, and I stand by him. You can see how lonesome it will be when she—she is gone," (with a half sob). "There's tears in my eyes, sir; I'm not ashamed of 'em—nor that we've grown to love her as an angel from the sky as stayed here awhile. The place is dear to us, sir, where her voice has made music, and where her eyes, like Colorado's blue sky, has beamed on us, and her yellow hair, like streaks of sunshine, has shone in the dark old room. We have the memory of that. For us old ones, memory is a blessing; we've little else. As the song says:

'But memory is the only friend
That grief can call its own.'"

Mac went to the door hastily to hide his agitaion.

"Po'try is natereller ter him than eatin'," apologized Pottle; "he must a drawed it in with his fust breath."

"You'll come up to the wedding," said McClure eagerly; "you must. What don't we owe you both for your care of Jean? Where would she be now if she had not been led here and taken care of? God only knows. Whether you will take aid from us or not, Mr. Mac—I believe that is the name?"

"Mr. Mac," put in Mac quickly; "quite right."

"Well, Mrs. MacDonald and I will put a sum of money in the bank in Denver to your credit. Use it if you will, or leave it; it's there. The wedding will be next week. I've made up my mind, so's

the Cap'en; we're not going to leave time for any more villains to interfere, and Mrs. MacDonald is just as set on it. So I'll expect you; and I tell you the truth, Mr. Pottle, if you're not there half my pleasure will be gone. I want all Jean's friends to be there, and see her joy, and wish her and her young husband all happiness as they start together on the voyage of life."

"We will come, sir," said Pottle, much affected; "you kin set us off sorter out of the way, an' we'll look on, eh, Mac?"

"Yes," sighed Mac; "I will—I must see her happy. Then—" he went out suddenly. "Then," he muttered to himself in the darkness, "some of my load will have fallen, some of the pangs tearing my miserable heart will be gone."

"All aboard," shouted the conductor, and they went out to the train, Jean lastly, leaning on Will's arm.

"Good-bye, dear uncle Pottle," she said brokenly. "I shall never forget you, or dear uncle Mac, or my peaceful life here where my happiness found me. Come to my wedding; I want all my friends with me, all who have had patience with my many, many failings, and have loved me so tenderly."

"We will not miss it," echoed Pottle; we'll look forred ter it now in the fust days of yer bein' gone. We'll look back ter it in the long, long days ter come. It will cheer us ter the end."

He shook her hand, came back again, and laid

his limp, cold hand in hers, then went away, looking at it with a sort of reverence. Mac came limping up; the light from the train shone on his bowed form, and his white hair and beard.

"There's happiness stretching so far ahead for you, Pretty," he said tremblingly, "that I shall never see the end. You have outlived your sorrow; it's gone on and left you. Good-by!"

He stooped and held her hand a moment to his lips. Then the conductor bundled Dick—full of hilarity and some undignified resistance—on the car, and the train moved on—swifter—swifter—till it was a speck in the distance.

CHAPTER XXIII

WHAT THE MOON SAW

It was late when the moon rose that night, and after all it was a jagged, unfinished moon; but light it gave, and grace and beauty, to all the quiet earth below.

Alike on land and sea—the moon shines freely and coldly, and the plains in the moonlight—the silence, vastness, monotony of land! Far, far and farther on, all still and quiet save here and there a lurking thing, a coyote or fierce wolf, or a band of antelopes fleet as the wind itself. Sometimes the red light of a camp-fire, a white covered wagon its tethered horses grazing startled to the sky and the strange, dull land. They belong to sleeping emigrants who still wander across the tracts of territory that steam and men's labor have redeemed of half its horrors. That same cold moon has gleamed on many a camp-fire, on countless wagons and weary animals; it has seen white and ghastly heaps of bones lying above the ground—dread guides to point the way to the city of the future. It has seen where now great herds of cattle graze, wild bands of Indians on their wilder ponies, and high, high above, has turned its mocking light on pallid faces

and dim, glazed eyes of dead and dying in the old, old, cruel war of races, the war of progress and civilization against the savage.

The moon looks down no more on scenes of carnage and cruelty. No more? Along the creek that glistens like silver grains are heaps of unsightly things, by the iron roadway, or pressed with torn and jagged shoulder against the barbed wires of the cruel boundary, are cattle—hundreds of them—dead from starvation—cold—thirst, from maddening thirst!

Is life all a story of cruelty, and is cruelty to dumb brutes a proof of civilization? Barbed wire fences are a product of the nineteen century but only the civilized, for gain or revenge, deprives innocent dumb beasts of water. Oh, the fearful thirst from the dry plains, the burning sun! The savage strikes at the man, rarely at the beast, and the man can defend himself. The many rotting carcasses tell a pitiful story. The moon has seen, when these great wastes are covered with icy snow, bleeding cattle drag themselves to the iron track to keep from the torture of the sharp crust where weak and hungry and suffering, too helpless to move, they are crushed by the great engines, thrown quivering, wounded, beside the track, they die in agony or linger hours and days till the prowling wolves come from afar and end their misery.

How lonely are those outcast stations along the iron roadway, each with its slinking light sending

a yellow gleam into the night! Does the moon ever listen to all the prayers, the raptures the heart-break, the joy below?

"How fine the night is!" said Pottle.

He was walking up and down the little station platform, his long, lean shadow following his long, lean figure, friendly twin shadows together.

"I think a moonlight night on the plains is the grandest on earth, so restful an' peaceful like, an' soothes a man whatever he's been or done. Nater is my God, Mac; if I'd come here in the beginnin' there wouldn't a bin no account ter settle."

Mac's stooping figure joined Pottle's, and a crooked shadow fell in with the straight one in its walk.

"I don't know," said Mac, slowly, "what your life has been. I've told you to-night that girl's history, for I couldn't help it. I had a longing so for human sympathy I couldn't keep my counsel. I am an older man than you, Pottle, and my time's nigh up; you keep your history; you're a quiet man, you bear your suffering silently, and the flood-gates of the past hasn't been opened for you, and—"

"Waal," Pottle interrupted, "be yer thinkin' of sum po'try?"

"No, not this night, not now. Listen!" Mac stopped at the edge of the platform, and looked drearily across the land. "What do you think of that old MacDonald I told you of?"

"D—d raskell!" said Pottle, promptly.

Mac was silent a moment.

"He was, there ain't any pity for such a man, and yet, Pottle, when he's old, and worn out, and feeble, and oh, how full of remorse; when he's got wrinkled hands and white hair, and dim eyes, Pottle, couldn't you have pity on him?" said Mac with a sob. "For God's sake, couldn't you have pity on him?"

"Mac, old boy," said Pottle, gently, "there's others whose lives are black an' evil; one of the speces shouldn't be down on a nuther! Gimme yer han'!"

Mac turned slowly and looked into Pottle's gaunt, haggard face.

"You guess, then I was that MacDonald. That she—she was my son's child?"

"Knowed it when yer told me 'bout her. Nater teached me a lot, an' when the train went off I knowed fur a fact thar was suthin' tuggin' at yer heart strings. Old pard, yer han', we'll stick tergether ter the end."

And so they did.

Is there no great heart beyond the silver light, beyond the ken of mortals to listen to the good and forget the evil; to look upon the picture of two storm-tossed wrecks who had sinned, who had suffered, and would suffer to the end?

Over the magic city the moon shone bright and clear. The enchanted city that rose from a barren plain in less than a quarter century. Fabled cities

of the past, the old and the new world look on in wonder. Theirs was the growth of centuries, this of years. Above it, around it, veiled in misty blue, with snow-capped, cloud rending peaks, the mighty walls of the Rockies, immovable, silent, pitiless as eternity.

Beyond the city of the living the abandoned city of the dead. The people of to-day have made a better resting-place for the loved and lost by the murmuring river, trees and flowers. But on the barren hill, is the neglected burying-ground of the past where sleep the pioneers who went before. Here lies old Judge Wallace unforgiving to the last breath he drew; disappointed in every ambition, thwarted in every desire, and beside him his sons.

Here a mound recently brought back from neglect and decay covering a weary mother who was a faithful wife and a disobedient daughter. How sad the two should often be together in pitiful contrast. Here a son will come and a son's son, and a sweet young mother, to lay flowers. Further on sleep the brother and sister who never knew the tie that bound them—innocent victims of a man's evil doing—Roy McDonald and the child martyr whose little unhappy life ended in a glorious death a hero must have envied.

Down from these peaceful graves are the rows of graves of the unnamed, the unmourned—unmourned? There are waiting, longing hearts in many humble homes, mourning the son whose fate they know not,

the daughter whose fate it is a blessing they shall never know. Here lie the flotsam and jetsam of a new country, the drift in a restless tide ebbing and flowing from one land to another, without will or purpose. Here the murderer and the murdered lie not far apart in quiet where no enmity can enter. And here sleeps Rose McCord, her written request, she wished her very dust to be forgot.

On woe and misery, on joy and happiness, the moon looks down.

Beyond the city, across the Platte, is an old vine-covered house, its pillared portico, ablaze with light, and the big stone mansion adjoining in another glow. The old house, though, is lighted for the first time in twenty years. Sam and Molly are hilarious with the McClure servants, and the new laundress (succeeding Mrs. Green, who ultimately became matron of a poorhouse and ended in the penitentiary) has proposed a toast to the bride to be; and Sam, in a state never before seen in a decorous colored man, shows a disposition to fall under the table.

"Doan keer," he says thickly," I allus loved Miss Virginny; knowed she'd come out ahead, an' so she done. I allus hated like pisen dem poor white trash puttin' on airs—"

"She don gone, Sam," cautions Aunty Molly mildly. Tain't fur sinners ter judge."

What is that frightful noise at McClures? It is the old man playing on the bagpipes. His wife

sits close beside him, the music does her good.

"Sure, he's not played on them since he was in the Gulch," she says fondly, "an' he do do it butiful."

"It is fine—fine," smiles the captain; "something martial, eh, Miss Franklin?"

"Martial, indeed, Mr. McClure is a fine musician." Miss Franklin is all smiles to-night, disposed to rejoice even in bagpipe playing. Miss Wallace, or Mrs. MacDonald, is watching a pretty picture through the doorway.

At the big window in the library standing by the heavy silken curtains looking out at the city across the river is Will, his bright, handsome face lighted by the moon that beams a benediction on the home. A manly lover brave and true. Close by his side, encircled by his protecting arm, is happy, happy Jean in her pretty white dress with her pretty bright face and smile.

"And you gave the two little children your lunch Will, that day?" she says tenderly.

"You were such a scared round-eyed thing," he laughs, "like a prairie owl."

"Poor little Mary MacDonald," Jean murmurs tearfully, "she gave her life for me. Faintly comes back to me as in a dream, the cold garret, that hard bed, and she gathering me in her arms, folding her tattered gown about me. Brave little child heart!"

"Don't you think, Jean, there must be recompense

in the hereafter," says Will; there are tears in his eyes, too.

"I know there is," she whispered.

Just then McClure calls out:

"Where's Dicky?"

"Under the sofa," from Miss Franklin with a hopeful air; "he doesn't like the music." Mr. McClure, she thought, might take some other method of expressing joy.

"Doesn't like the bagpipes?" laughs Mr. McClure; he's no collie; he's an American dog; he'd like a brass band and Yankee Doodle. Come, Miss Franklin, then play my song for me and I'll sing—yes, I'll sing," he said firmly; "you needn't frown, Biddy, you can stand it. I'll sing about my Jean—Bobby Burns' own song."

So he sings, "I love my Jean." Will draws Jean closer and holding her to his heart the sweet promise of the future, the happiness, the joy, comes to him, the solemnness of his charge, and his love, and he says:

"My love, my wife, whatever the future brings, I shall say to the end of my life and all the afterwards—the long afterwards of eternity:

'Dearer than my deathless soul
I still would love my Jean.'"

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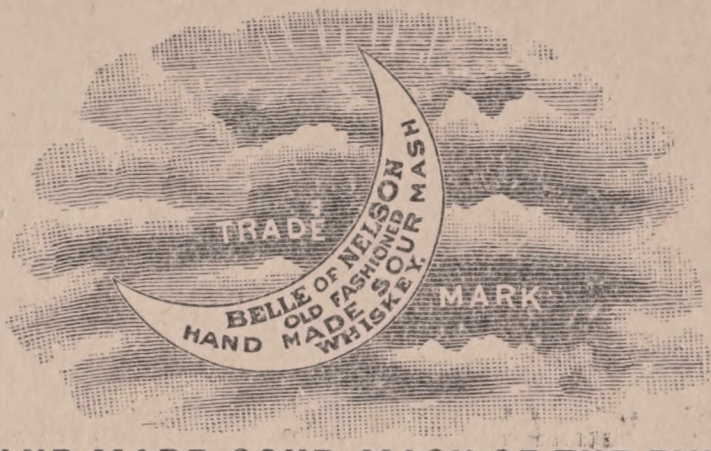

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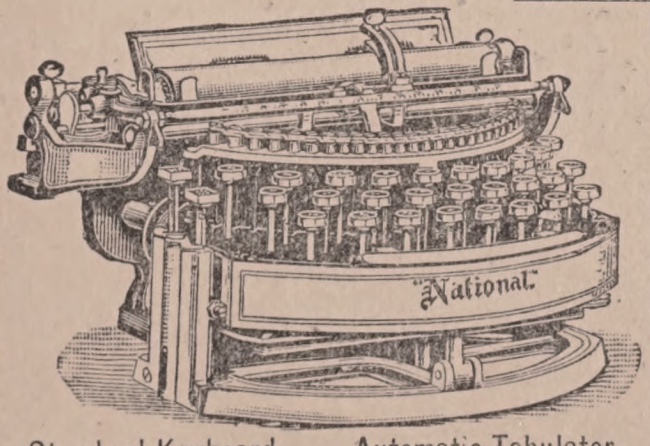

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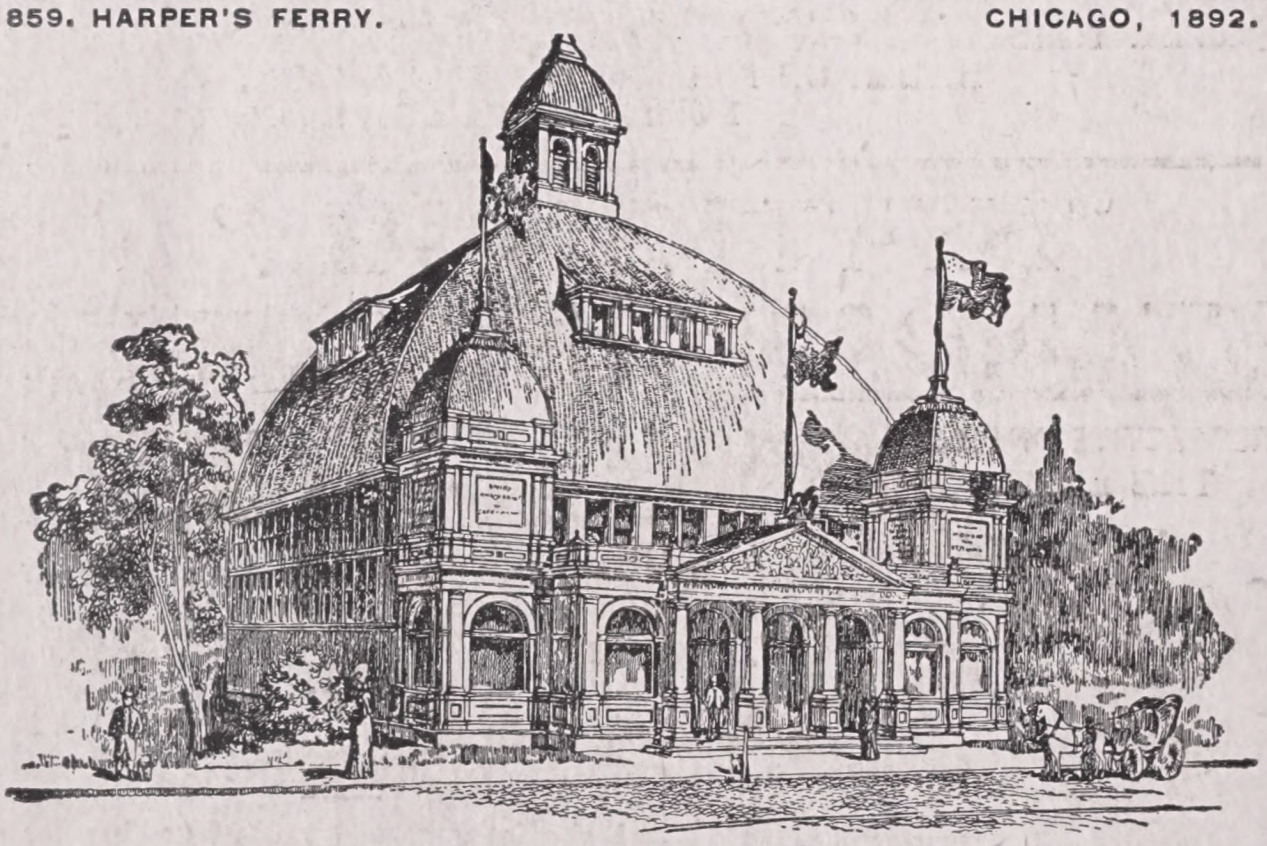

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